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POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION CONFERENCES

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POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION CONFERENCES

**THE TECHNICAL ORGANISATION
OF
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES**

**BY
WILLIAM O'DAVOREN**

**WITH A PREFACE BY MR. A. VELLEMAN, M.A., PH.D.,
PROFESSOR AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA**

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PREFACE

It is almost a commonplace to remark that while scientific and technical progress have advanced with rapid strides in recent years, the efficiency of the machinery of government both national and international still falls far short of what might be expected by comparison with achievements in other domains, and indeed of the most pressing needs of our time. This may be due to the fact that mechanical invention and scientific progress are the outcome of reasoning and experiment while political institutions have roots that go deep into history and are but the momentary expression of men's passions and beliefs the working of which remains obscure.

The great task lying ahead will therefore largely consist in bringing political institutions, and especially those designed to foster international co-operation, into line with the high standard of progress attained in so many other fields. It is indeed an inspiring task, one which has stirred the best thinkers of all times, which is perceived as the throbbing impulse behind the present struggle, and one which will be a compelling motive to coming generations.

Mr. O'Davoren has made a very useful contribution to the work to be accomplished in writing his book on Post-War Reconstruction Conferences and

their technical organisation. Having himself been associated in one capacity or another with almost all the important international conferences held during the elating if ultimately disappointing period of 1919-1939, and having performed responsible duties in connection with the conferences and meetings organised by the International Labour Office, one of the successful institutions set up in 1919, he was especially qualified to write such a book which will certainly be of the greatest assistance to all who may be called upon to organise international conferences in the future.

The scheme of the book is simple and attractive. The reader is, so to say, taken by the hand along the winding path which originates at the birth of the conference and ends on its closing scenes. The traveller is constantly entertained by lively anecdotes or piquant details which keep his interest alive until he is finally surprised to find himself at his journey's end.

The School of Interpreters of the University of Geneva at which Mr. O'Davoren is a greatly appreciated Lecturer has much pleasure in sponsoring this book and wishing it well both with the student of political science and the general reader.

October 1942.

ANTOINE VELLEMAN, M.A., Ph.D.
PROFESSOR AT THE FACULTY OF LETTERS,
UNIVERSITY OF GENEVA.

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POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION CONFERENCES

THEIR TECHNICAL ORGANISATION

INTRODUCTION

Whatever may be the opinions held in regard to the achievements or failures of the international institutions which were set up after the world war of 1914-18, it will probably be generally recognised that the international conferences which were held under the auspices of these institutions were well run from a technical point of view. The experience thus gained in this particular field of international administration may well be regarded as one of the outstanding and concrete results of their activities and will probably be of great assistance in any future attempts at setting up machinery for the orderly transaction of business between nations. Nor was this result easily obtained. Previous experience in the organisation and working of international conferences was very limited. Before 1919, whenever it appeared advisable to hold an

international conference, whether political or technical in character, the duties connected with the summoning and running of the conference were generally assumed by a particular Government, as a rule the Government which had taken the initiative of suggesting the conference and on whose territory it usually took place. Only after 1919 was international collaboration between nations in political and technical fields organised in a comprehensive and systematic manner and permanent central institutions created to perform duties comparable to those which in the national sphere are carried out by government departments. The few international institutions which existed before that time and which may in a way be regarded as the forerunners of the larger institutions created after 1919, though international in regard to their jurisdiction and the scope of their activities, mainly depended upon the support of a particular Government responsible for their practical working. The conferences summoned by these early international institutions, valuable as they no doubt were by their pioneer work, were marked by a certain casualness both as regards their organisation and the continuity of their activities.

New standards were set up with the creation in 1919 of great international institutions of a permanent character vested with both legislative and executive powers and endowed with adequate

financial means. As from that time delegates who were attending international assemblies expected to find at them the same measure of efficiency as that to which they were accustomed in their national parliaments, the smooth working of which was very often the outcome of a lengthy process of experimenting extending over centuries.

The problems which had to be faced by the new international institutions were many and complex and their solution required much ingenuity, patience and common sense. Delegates who came to meetings very naturally brought with them their particular national outlook and prejudices regarding parliamentary usage and it was by no means one of the minor problems that had to be solved to reconcile as far as possible the divergent conceptions regarding important points of procedure. In many cases the special problems arising out of the constitution of each separate international institution made it necessary to evolve entirely novel methods of procedure for dealing with situations which could hardly occur in the national sphere. For example, the whole question of languages, though it arises in the legislative assemblies of certain countries, where however it offers less difficulty, assumes paramount importance in an international meeting and satisfactory arrangements for enabling delegates who are speaking in their mother tongue to understand one another are an essential condition

for the smooth and effectual working of any international conference. The drawing up of suitable rules of procedure, combining as far as possible the conflicting national practices and affording an adequate guarantee of fair play to all concerned and of orderly proceedings, is also one of the manifold problems which from the very outset confront those who are responsible for the organisation of international conferences.

In the following pages it is proposed to discuss these problems and the solutions which were given to them as a result of an experience covering a period of some twenty years and tested in innumerable meetings most varied in character.

It has hitherto been the tragic destiny of mankind to oscillate between the two poles of war and peace, and it is more than likely that the present period of strife will be followed by an era of renewed attempts at international co-operation, the need of which will be felt all the more keenly because of the desire to correct the mistakes of the past and of the magnitude of the work to be accomplished. Though war seems to be the very negation of international co-operation, the present conflict has once again shown the close interdependence of all nations and that no lasting peace can be achieved outside a strongly organised international community. No matter how things to come are to be shaped, it may safely be assumed that for the

work of reconstruction and planning which will have to be undertaken after the present struggle, the practical experience acquired during the interval between the two wars in the working of international conferences will be largely made use of by those in whose hands will lie the responsible but challenging task of refloating the badly battered ship of international co-operation.

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CHAPTER I

WHY AND HOW INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ARE SUMMONED

International conferences are one of the normal channels and by no means the least important through which nations enter into and maintain relations between one another and settle matters of reciprocal interest. Such conferences are extremely varied in nature. Some are convened for the pursuit of the loftiest aims which at all times have occupied the minds of men, such as the maintenance of peace and the orderly governance of the community of nations. Others have a more limited object, as, for example, the adoption of new regulations on some legal or technical point. Were a list to be given of all the international conferences which have been held during the last two decades and of the innumerable agreements arrived at in those conferences it would afford a very striking picture of the varied and complex nature of international administration.

The War and International Co-operation.

These activities do not cease completely even when, as at the present time, a great war is being waged. Belligerents and their respective sympathising countries find it more necessary than ever to hold conferences in order either to concert measures for the conduct of the war or to draw up plans for the future reconstruction work to be undertaken when, the war having come to an end, the energies of men may again be turned to peaceful pursuits. Even in time of war relations between opponents are not completely severed. Problems may arise which make it necessary to arrange for negotiations and the conclusion of agreements between belligerents, in which case the Government of a neutral country or an international institution of unimpeachable impartiality such as the International Red Cross is generally requested to act as go-between. A recent example of such a procedure was the conclusion of a convention between two great Powers at war fixing the conditions for the reciprocal exchange of diplomats, consuls and other officials. On the other hand, relations between neutral or semi-neutral countries and belligerents, though necessarily affected by the general disturbance resulting from a major war, are in many respects intensified on account of the

numerous problems arising out of war conditions which have to be solved, especially in the economic and financial fields. The negotiation of satisfactory commercial treaties is of paramount importance for nations engaged in a war, both with a view to importing the necessary raw materials and manufactured goods and to securing foreign currencies by the export of their own commodities. The conclusion or renewal of such treaties implies the holding of many conferences which, though little advertised, are nevertheless an essential factor in the life of the countries concerned.

International institutions themselves, and especially their activities which are pursued by means of conferences, are diversely affected by war conditions. Some, such as the International Red Cross Committee, the humanitarian work of which is a necessary if unfortunate corollary to war, become exceptionally active in time of hostilities. Others, whose pursuits are essentially of a technical character, continue their work almost unperturbed at any rate as long as the country in which they have their seat is not involved in the war. The Universal Postal Union and the International Offices for the Protection of Intellectual Property at Berne are perhaps the most striking examples of institutions which being of a distinctly technical character and having their seat in a neutral country are able to carry on their useful

work even in a chaotic world. But other international institutions are less fortunate. These in time of war find the greater part of their activities, by their very nature, interrupted, especially those which in normal times lead up to and bear fruition in their annual assemblies.

Suggested Classification of International Conferences.

International conferences which reflect the complexity of the modern world elude any clear-cut classification, but nevertheless certain types may be distinguished. First of all, it is possible to make a broad distinction between, on the one hand, *political* or *diplomatic* conferences and, on the other hand, *technical* conferences. Only official international conferences are dealt with here and conferences of a semi-official or private character, such as scientific congresses and conferences of private organisations, do not come within the scope of our study. The above tentative classification should, however, be immediately qualified by the somewhat obvious remark that there are very few political or diplomatic conferences which have not their important technical aspects, while rare are the technical conferences which have not got their political background. As an example of an essentially political conference mention may be made of the Locarno Conference of 1925 or of the Montreux Conference on the Dardanelles (June 1936), while

for example the conference on the Unification of Buoyage and Lighting of Coasts at Lisbon (October 1930), might be cited as an essentially technical conference. On the other hand, the ill-fated Disarmament Conference and the abortive World Economic Conference were examples of mixed conferences.

Another point of view from which international conferences may be classified is according to the scope of their jurisdiction or of their work. Two important classes of conferences may be distinguished on the basis of this criterion: *general* conferences, and *special* or *regional* conferences. General conferences are those which include representatives from practically all the independent States of the world. The annual assemblies of certain international institutions, such as the assemblies of the League of Nations or of the International Institute of Agriculture or the annual conference of the International Labour Organisation are examples of such general conferences. They usually derive their authority from an international treaty and are permanent in character. The closing of a particular session does not imply that they cease to exist as an international entity or that the credentials of delegates necessarily thereby become invalid. In many respects those bodies may be compared to national legislative assemblies. The Disarmament Conference and the World Economic

Conference, to which reference has already been made, were also general conferences, though they were convened for a particular purpose.

On the other hand, regional or special conferences are those which are restricted to a limited group of States, either because their jurisdiction extends only to a definite geographical area, or because, in view of the nature of the subjects they deal with, only certain States are concerned in their work. Many regional conferences functioned before the present war and some of them are still very active, such as the Pan-American Conference, which includes representatives of the States of North, Central and South America and meets from time to time in the capital of one of these States to discuss matters of common interest to the Americas. Recent developments have shown the reality of this great association of States. The British Imperial Conference may also be regarded in a sense as a regional conference, though not limited to a continent. In Europe many regional conferences used to meet at regular intervals before the outbreak of hostilities: Central and Eastern Europe were organised politically in the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente. The Baltic States and the northern countries had respectively their Baltic Entente and the Conference of the Northern Countries. The great powers themselves made several attempts at centralising their influence in

some supreme body, but all these endeavours were unsuccessful because the divisions arising out of conflicting interests overrode the forces making for unity and co-operation.

As was pointed out above, another type of conferences with limited scope, special conferences, are those which deal with problems or interests which by their very nature are the concern of only a group of States. The International Sugar Conference or the International Wheat Conference are examples of such conferences, whose activities, it is interesting to note, have not been interrupted by present war conditions. These conferences whose purpose is to regulate the production and marketing of those staple products necessarily include only representatives from the sugar and wheat-producing countries.

There is one general observation that may be made in regard to all conferences of some importance, which is that however different they may be in their nature, composition and scope of work, the problems relating to their organisation, which are our special concern, are very similar in all cases.

The Competent Authority to Convene a Conference.

One of the first problems which arises in connection with any conference is that of determining the

authority competent to decide on its holding, fix its agenda and issue invitations to attend it. Here again a distinction may be made between conferences which are convened by a central authority acting under an international treaty or the constitution of a permanent international institution, and those which come into being as a result of an initiative taken by a particular Government or a group of Governments. If we adhere to the classification given above of, on the one hand, political and technical conferences, and on the other general and regional or special conferences, examples taken from the experience of the last twenty years might readily be given of conferences of any of these types which were called either by the competent authority of a permanent international institution or on the initiative of a particular Government or group of Governments acting jointly. Prior to 1914 practically all important international conferences met in response to an invitation from a particular Government, which assumed the responsibility of its convening and running. Thus the convocation of the first official international conference called upon to deal with questions relating to the regulation of conditions of work was suggested as early as 1890 by the Swiss Government, which ultimately led to the holding of the Berlin Conference in March 1890, on the invitation of the German Government.

After 1919 the convening of important official international conferences by the competent authority of an international institution became the common practice, whereas the summoning of a conference by a particular Government or group of Governments tended to become exceptional. Even in 1919, before the new international institutions had formally begun to function, it was found necessary to make special arrangements for the calling of the first session of their constituent assemblies. Thus it was the Government of the United States of America which was asked to call and organise the first session of the International Labour Conference and for that purpose was assisted by an international committee composed of seven members appointed respectively by the United States, Great Britain, France, Italy, Japan, Belgium and Switzerland. The first session of the International Labour Conference thus convened met at Washington from 29 October to 29 November 1919. All the subsequent sessions of the International Labour Conference were summoned by the authority regularly empowered so to do, namely the Governing Body of the International Labour Office.

The international practice of the last two decades has pointed more and more to the adoption of the method in accordance with which international conferences, especially those that are general in

character as regards their composition and their agenda, are summoned by an international body acting under the provisions of an international treaty. Since it is likely that in the world that will emerge from the present conflict international administration, organised either on a continental or a world basis or a combination of both these systems, will further develop in the direction of greater centralisation of powers and continuity of action, it may be safely assumed that the practice of entrusting a central authority with the duty of convening international conferences will become the usual and undisputed method of organising international conferences. It is therefore more specially with the problems relating to the calling and preparation of conferences in accordance with this practice that we now propose to deal.

Fixing the Agenda.

Another important matter that has to be dealt with at the very threshold of any international conference is that of defining its programme of work. If it has been decided to hold a conference it is obviously with a view to achieving a certain purpose. This purpose is given formal expression in what is known as the *agenda*. The drawing-up of the agenda of a conference is an extremely important business, since a defective wording of the items which appear on it may have far-reaching conse-

quences. The agenda defines the terms of reference of the future conference and fixes the boundaries within which it will be allowed to move. In a sense it is to the conference what the law is to the court and it will be the duty of each and all of the delegates attending the conference, and more especially of its chairman, to see that it is correctly interpreted and that the decisions taken are within the four corners of its binding instructions. The whole validity of any international convention adopted at a conference might indeed be subsequently disputed if it were proved that some of its provisions went beyond the terms of reference of the conference as fixed by its agenda. In any international institution the object of which is the reconciling of conflicting political, economic or social interests, the observance of the conditions laid down in its constitution and Standing Orders for the fixing of the agenda and the strict adherence to the agenda when once it has been formally adopted constitute an essential guarantee of fair dealing for all the parties concerned. It will thus be easily realised how important is the wording of the agenda of any conference. Many instances might be given in which a point of importance had to be omitted from an international convention, although there was general agreement that it should have been included, simply because it was outside the scope of the question as defined by the agenda.

Even when the greatest care is taken in the choice of a suitable form of words, unexpected difficulties do nevertheless often baffle the ingenuity of the most skilled draughtsman. A case in point was when the problem of the reduction of hours of work in the textile industry was placed on the agenda of a session of the International Labour Conference. A question very soon arose as to whether the "rayon" industry, which is a chemical industry, but the products of which compete with similar textile commodities, should or should not be included in the proposed regulations. In a general way it may be said that in drawing up the agenda the use of comprehensive terms is preferable to any attempt at a closer definition of the subject. The wider formula affords greater liberty of appreciation for the future conference, whose hands will thus not be unnecessarily tied and to which it will be open, if it deem fit, to restrict the scope of the question and adjust it to the common denominator accepted by the majority of members.

Special Safeguards.

The constitution and rules of most international institutions contain detailed provisions governing the procedure to be followed in the fixing of the agenda of their annual assemblies and important conferences. These provisions are intended to provide adequate safeguards for the fulfilment

of one of the most important duties which is as a rule entrusted to the highest authority of the institution in question. One of these safeguards ensures that the agenda shall be transmitted so as to reach the affiliated members within a certain time-limit — generally four months — before the opening of the session. The purpose of this provision is, on the one hand, to give members a guarantee that new items will not be sprung on them at the last moment and, on the other, to allow them adequate time for carrying out the preparatory work necessary for their effective participation in the conference. In important matters, elaborate consultations may have to take place within the national government departments or with national organisations representing the interests likely to be affected by the proposed international regulations. The provision relating to the time-limit within which the agenda must be received by members is regarded of such importance in some institutions that it is given a binding character by its inclusion in the constitution, and no exception is permissible. This implies that the future conference could not validly discuss any matter the placing of which on its agenda had not been notified to the members at least within the prescribed time before the opening of the session.

In other institutions a certain measure of elasticity is allowed. This is possible when the provision

in question is not included in the constitution of the organisation, but forms part of its rules of procedure, which have not the same binding force and can more easily be altered. These rules may provide, for example, that the agenda shall be circulated "as nearly as possible" four months before the date fixed for the opening of the session, and that additional items may be added on the agenda if a member makes a request to that effect at least one month before the opening of the session. Such items are then placed on a supplementary list, which has also to be circulated to members within a given time before the opening of the session. The assembly itself then decides whether the items on the supplementary list shall be included in the agenda of the session. Furthermore, in cases of special urgency, additional items may be placed on the agenda, but the consideration of such items, unless otherwise ordered by a qualified majority of the assembly — a two-thirds majority, for example — has to be postponed until a certain time after they have been placed on the agenda.

An Evil to be Avoided.

In addition to the provisions referred to above and relating to the interval which must elapse between the circulation of the agenda and the opening of the session, other important safeguards for the orderly conduct of business are those

resulting from the actual procedure to be followed for placing items on the agenda. The overloading of the agenda of international conferences is one of the evils against which it is the most difficult to guard, and in the body which is responsible for the fixing of the agenda there is a proneness on the part of members to pursue in this matter an easy-going policy of reciprocal leniency. Each member has as a rule his own particular subject which he is well determined to have placed on the agenda at all costs. He is therefore quite prepared to vote for his neighbour's pet subject provided that the latter does the same in regard to his own and that he may thus give a good report of himself when he gets home. The upshot of this bargaining is only too often that the agenda finally adopted includes practically all the proposals put forward and becomes quite unmanageable. The central administration which is responsible for carrying out the preparatory work on all these items is the first to bear the brunt of this unwise policy. Later on, when delegates who have perhaps laid aside urgent national work and undertaken a long journey, maybe from the Antipodes, to attend the conference and find it impossible to get a hearing, the ill effects of the policy of overloading the agenda make themselves acutely felt. As the short span of life of the conference rapidly wanes, the work still to be accomplished seems more and more to

partake of a nightmare. Nerves are frayed and the progress is thereby further impeded. Plenary meetings and committee meetings follow in close succession or are held simultaneously and ultimately it is only by means of almost superhuman efforts that the agenda is "exhausted" — as are too the delegates and the staff of the secretariat. This overhasty work is bound to be open to serious criticism. The passing of an excessive number of international conventions and resolutions, which national parliaments and administrations are quite unable to cope with, rather detracts from than enhances the prestige of international organisations.

A Successful Remedy.

As an instance of the kind of precautions that may be taken to obviate this danger, attention may be drawn to the measures adopted in this connection by the Governing Body of the International Labour Office. At one of its early sessions it felt the necessity of drawing up a special regulation governing the procedure to be followed for fixing the agenda of the annual sessions of the International Labour Conference. The procedure embodied in this regulation, though perhaps somewhat intricate, seems nevertheless well worth being explained in some detail, since it is probably unique in its kind and is illustrative of the special difficulties inherent in the working of an interna-

tional organisation. According to this procedure the first step towards fixing the agenda is the initiation, at the appropriate session of the Governing Body, of a preliminary discussion on the possible items which might be placed on the agenda of the contemplated session of the Conference. This discussion, which is of an exploratory character, affords an opportunity of taking stock of what has already been achieved, reviewing all the proposals which in the past at some time or another have been put forward by a Government or any representative organisation of employers or workers, and generally focussing attention on problems which are of special topical interest in the light of recent developments in the economic and social fields. This preliminary discussion leads up to the establishment of a list of questions, upon which the Office is instructed to prepare for the following session of the Governing Body statements of the existing law and practice in the various countries relative to those questions. At its following session the Governing Body is called upon to make a final choice between the various items which it had provisionally selected at its previous meeting. It then has before it the statements of the law and practice referred to above, as well as a note embodying the suggestions of the Office concerning a suitable programme of work for the session in question of the conference. After a fresh and thorough discus-

sion of the whole matter, the Governing Body then proceeds to a series of eliminatory votes in accordance with the following rules :

1. The Governing Body shall decide by a first vote whether it will place on the agenda of the Conference all the items proposed, or whether it will eliminate some of them. If it decides to insert all the items proposed, the agenda of the Conference is considered as fixed by this first vote. If, on the other hand, it decides to eliminate some of them, the procedure shall be as follows.

2. Each member of the Governing Body receives a voting paper on which a list of all the questions proposed is given and each member voting is asked to cross out one question. Any voting paper on which no question is crossed out or on which more than one question is crossed out shall be regarded as invalid.

3. The question crossed out on the largest number of voting papers shall be regarded as having been eliminated. If there is an equal number of votes for the elimination of two questions, a vote is taken as between the two. If the voting is still equal, it shall be decided by lot which of the two questions should be eliminated. If there is an equal number of votes for the elimination of more than two questions, one of them shall be eliminated by applying to those questions alone the procedure of paragraph 2 ; if the voting continues to be equal the decision shall be taken by lot.

4. A fresh vote shall be taken by the same procedure until such time as only one question remains.

5. The remaining question shall be put to a vote, members being asked to vote for or against it. If it obtains the majority of the votes cast, it shall be regarded as having been placed on the agenda. If it does not obtain such a majority, the questions previously eliminated shall be put to a vote in the order of preference, the one eliminated last being taken first, until such time as one question obtains the majority and is thus placed on the agenda.

6. The Governing Body then decides whether it wishes to place another question on the agenda. If there is a majority in favour of placing another question on the agenda, it proceeds to take a vote for or against the other questions on which a vote has not been taken, taking them in the order of preference.

7. The procedure of paragraph 6 shall be repeated after the placing of each item on the agenda.

These rules may perhaps at first sight appear somewhat bewildering and, indeed, in the Governing Body itself they were greeted at the outset by many with indulgent scepticism. In the course of years, however, experience has shown that they fulfilled their purpose and that, while affording adequate guarantee against any tendency to giving way to a demagogic policy in the matter of fixing the agenda of the annual conference, they did not in practice operate to the detriment of those who were the keenest on securing the maximum output of the machinery created for the passing of international labour legislation.

The Contents of the Agenda.

The method for fixing the agenda having thus been dealt with, consideration must now be given to its contents. For obvious reasons, no hard and fast rules can be drawn up in this connection, since the agenda of the general assembly or conferences of a live institution reflects the complexity and constantly changing needs of modern life. There are, however, a few general remarks that may be made.

The agenda of the general assembly of an international institution includes as a rule items of a recurrent nature and other items specially placed on the agenda of each particular session. The items of a recurrent nature are usually the following :

- (1) a report by the permanent chief of the central administration on the work of the institution since the previous general assembly, and in particular on the steps taken to give effect to the decisions taken at the last meeting ;
- (2) reports from bodies which have met since the last assembly and which, under the constitution of the institution or their terms of reference, report directly to the general assembly ;
- (3) reports on matters which lie solely within the competency of the general assembly, such as the reports on the application of certain international conventions ;

- (4) election of members to certain other bodies, as, for example, the central executive authority of the institution (Council, Governing Body, Permanent Committee, etc.).

Special items are those which have been placed on the agenda either by the general assembly itself at a previous session — and for such a decision a qualified majority may be required — or by the body competent for fixing the agenda of the assembly. The nature and number of these special items naturally depend upon the duties of the organisation concerned, the stage reached in the preparatory work accomplished by its technical services or consultative bodies set up by it, the needs of the moment and the particular procedure applied to the consideration of questions by the general assembly. It may be that the rules of the organisation provide for a procedure of double discussion at two successive sessions, in which case the problems subjected to that procedure will normally appear on the agenda of two consecutive sessions. As was already pointed out, the agenda, once finally approved, becomes a formal deed which may not be altered except in special circumstances. The rigour of this rule may, however, be tempered by a provision reserving to the general assembly itself the right to withdraw items from its agenda. An example of such a provision is

Article 16 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation, which stipulates that :

1. Any of the Governments of the Members may formally object to the inclusion of any item or items in the agenda. The grounds for such objection shall be set forth in a reasoned statement addressed to the Director, who shall circulate it to all the Members of the Permanent Organisation.

2. Items to which such objection has been made shall not, however, be excluded from the agenda, if at the Conference a majority of two-thirds of the votes cast by the Delegates present is in favour of considering them.

The Date and Place of the Conference.

The next questions to be settled are the date and place of the conference. Whether the conference be general or special in character, decisions on those points are generally taken by the same body as that which fixes its agenda. The annual assembly or conference of international institutions usually meets at the seat of the institution. When this institution has a permanent abode in a building of its own the sessions of its highest authority are generally held in an assembly hall specially built for that purpose. There are, however, important international organisations, such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union or the Pan-American Conference, which are wont to hold their annual assemblies in the capital of one of the affiliated countries.

Even organisations which are permanently settled in a particular city are themselves often led to hold important conferences or their annual assembly in some other place, either on grounds of political expediency or to meet the convenience of the majority of members, or because the country in question is specially indicated on account of its outstanding experience of the subject to be discussed. Not infrequently a conference is held in a particular country on the invitation of its Government, which may be anxious to welcome it as an act of courtesy towards the organisation concerned. In that case the inviting Government may be willing to bear the additional expenses entailed by the holding of the meeting in its country.

The choice of a suitable date for a conference is a matter which only too often gives rise to protracted and heated discussions. All those who have worked in an international organisation are familiar with the ritual scene of delegates waving calendars in their hands, and urging the adoption of a certain date which meets their own convenience. The process of dove-tailing both the national and international engagements of each and all members places a heavy strain upon the patience and ingenuity of the chairman.

Climatic considerations, parliamentary duties, religious and other festivals, all play their part in complicating the decision. Delegates from tropical

or semi-tropical countries argue that they cannot be expected to affront the rigours of a northern climate in winter, while nationals of countries enjoying a temperate climate all the year round urge with equal justification that they should not be subjected to the severe strain of working under almost tropical conditions. Or workers' delegates emphatically protest that under no circumstances could they be away from their country on the 1st May, or exception is taken by some in equally strong terms to any work being done, say on Whit Monday. The endless quibbling on matters of this kind led to the adoption by some organisations of a fixed rule, according to which the annual assembly opens on the first Monday, or any other day of the week, of a certain month. Thus the ordinary session of the Assembly of the League of Nations for many years opened on the first Monday in September, and the session of the International Labour Conference on the first Thursday in June. These rules, although not always rigorously observed, were found on the whole to serve a useful purpose.

CHAPTER II

PREPARATORY WORK FOR THE CONFERENCE

The agenda and the date and place of meeting having been fixed, the first piece of work to be taken in hand by the permanent administration is the drafting and despatch of the letter of convocation.

The Letter of Convocation.

The contents and form of this letter necessarily depend upon the character and objects of the conference and it is obviously impossible to suggest a stereotyped pattern which might be used in all cases. In order, however, to give some idea of the lines along which such a document may be drafted, a suggested letter of convocation to an imaginary conference is given below :

Name of town.

6 October 1942.

Sir,

*(1) I have the honour to inform you that the...
(here name of body which convened the session),
during its recent session which was held on 23-25*

September last, decided that the thirty-second session of the... conference should open at Berne on Tuesday, 10 November 1942.

(2) Items on the agenda. *I have also the honour to inform you that the items placed on the agenda of this session of the conference by the... (name of body which convened the session) or by previous sessions of the conference are as follows :*

- I.
- II.
- III.
- IV.

(After the above list of questions, which are those that have been formally placed on the agenda of the session, it may be expedient to give in regard to each item either in the letter itself or in an annex to it a short statement recalling the circumstances in which it was placed on the agenda and the preparatory work done in regard to it.)

(3) Other matters before the conference. *In addition to the above-mentioned items on the agenda of the conference the following matters will come up before the conference at its thirty-second session for consideration :*

1. *Annual report of the Director or Secretary-General of the (here name of the institution) ;*
2. *(Mention here any other reports on matters*
3. *which are to come up for consideration*
4. *before the conference.)*

(4) Credentials of delegates and technical advisers. *The date of opening of the thirty-second session of the conference having been fixed as 10 November 1942, the credentials of delegates and their advisers must in accordance with the requirements of Article (Refer here to the relevant provision of the rules), be deposited not later than 28 October 1942.*

(If a special time-limit is laid down in the rules for the communication of resolutions, insert a paragraph on the following lines) :

(5) Resolutions. *In accordance with the provisions of Article of the Standing Orders, resolutions other than those relating to items on the agenda which are intended for consideration by the conference must be deposited with the (name of permanent institution) not later than November 1942.*

*I have the honour to be,
Sir,*

Your obedient Servant.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs,

.....

To Whom the Letter should be Sent.

An important practical question which immediately arises in connection with the despatch of the letter of convocation is that of the addressees to whom it shall be sent. The reply to this question depends very much upon the kind of conference or meeting which is to be summoned. In the case of

conferences or large committees strictly technical in character whose members often attend in a personal capacity it is not unusual for the letter of convocation to be sent directly to the members themselves who are to be invited to attend the meeting, although they may originally have been appointed by or on the proposal of their Government. On the other hand, the letter of convocation to important political or diplomatic conferences or to the annual assembly of international institutions of a political character is almost invariably addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, since it is the established practice in nearly all countries that this Ministry is the competent national department for dealing with matters relating to attendance at such international conferences. But in the case of conferences convened by permanent international institutions whose work is primarily of a technical character, this method of communication with national authorities through the Ministry for Foreign Affairs seems unduly cumbrous and often entails unnecessary delay. The layman very naturally fails to understand why the letter of convocation to, say, a conference on some highly technical maritime question should in the first instance be sent to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs where there is always a risk of it being pigeon-holed and action on it delayed, while if it reached directly the competent national maritime depart-

ment the response would be much quicker and more to the point. The practice of corresponding exclusively with the national Ministry for Foreign Affairs in all matters relating to international conferences appeared so sacrosanct prior to 1914 that it was thought necessary when new international institutions were set up after the last war to include in the constitution of one of them a special clause stipulating that the government department of any of the Members (of the Organisation) which deals with the questions under examination may communicate directly with the Director through the representative of their Government on the Governing Body of the institution, or failing any such representative through such other qualified official as the Government may nominate for that purpose.

This provision, which at the time was regarded as a bold departure from the accepted diplomatic practice, led to the creation in many countries within the department dealing with the questions concerned of a special service, to function as the normal channel of communication between the Government and the International Organisation. However, in spite of this endeavour to introduce a certain degree of uniformity in the method of communication between a great central international institution and the States Members, in practice there proved to be an extraordinary diversity of systems used for communicating with the various Governments,

some of which required that up to a score of copies of any particular letter should be sent to a variety of destinations.

The List of Official Addresses.

It will therefore be readily understood how essential it is for any international administration to establish and keep constantly up to date an accurate list of the addresses to which official correspondence is to be despatched. This list may be prepared in the form of a *booklet*, the roneographed pages of which are tied together by two strings and can thus be easily removed. A separate page is allotted to each Government and bears all the particulars relevant to the despatch of official correspondence to that Government: the *languages* to be used, name and titles of its representative, *form of the address* to be typed on the letter and the envelope, number of *additional* copies required either as appendices to the original letter or to be sent under separate cover to other persons or bodies for their information. A *central department* is usually made responsible for circulating as occasion may arise to all the services concerned new pages embodying any change of addresses which may be necessary. This practical device avoids the inconvenience of frequent corrections on an original list.

The letter of convocation to important international conferences may be either a printed or a multigraphed document. When there is a special urgency in informing far-distant countries of the summoning and agenda of a session, it may be expedient to communicate this information by telegram in advance of the letter, specially when the constitution of the organisation requires that the members be notified of the agenda a fixed time before the opening of the session. The increasing use of *airmail post* for correspondence with overseas countries makes it advisable to have an adequate number of copies of the letter of convocation prepared on thin paper. One more word of practical advice. It may be found convenient to file the text of the letter of convocation and the replies as they come in either in one single file, or to classify each reply in a separate national file. The latter system is preferable if a large attendance may be expected.

Documentary Preparation for the Conference.

The next business to be attended to is that of preparing the reports for the conference on the items appearing on its agenda. In some organisations the preparatory work for the general assembly or other important meetings of conferences or committees is left almost entirely in the hands of

independent technical bodies of a consultative character, within which very often a small sub-committee or a hard-working reporter does all the necessary preparatory work. The duties of the permanent central administration are in that case confined to collecting and compiling the relevant documentary information, submitting it to the competent body, and doing the necessary secretarial work. In other international organisations the rôle of the central administration is much more comparable to that of national government departments. The administration itself is expected to work out a policy and formulate proposals to serve as a basis for discussion in the meeting.

The nature and extent of the preparatory work required for a conference may be further determined by the character of the meeting. If it is an essentially political body, very little preparation may be required. The real work will be accomplished by means of informal talks between the principal protagonists, and the conclusions reached are most often the result of the work done behind the scenes by the experts accompanying the chief actors, whose main purpose in forgoing is to have an opportunity of getting into personal touch. A round-table lunch may often more effectively serve to achieve the purpose in view than an abundant supply of documents and a score of full-dress formal sittings.

Another type of meetings are those of bodies whose functions pertain to a certain sector of international administration, such as the supervision of the operation of certain international conventions regarding for example postal communications, the fight against the use of narcotics, inland navigation, or the administration of certain territories, and these entail preparatory work which is essentially of an administrative character. Reports are received at regular intervals from the competent national authorities, and it is the duty of the central administration to analyse and tabulate these reports, and translate and circulate them in the required form for the consideration of the competent international body. These duties may doubtless often be onerous, but do not as such necessarily imply any creative activity.

The main functions of yet another kind of international organisation which may perhaps be regarded as the prototype of the international organisation of the future, is that of framing and passing international conventions or agreements embodying certain generally accepted principles or rules, the enforcement of which by a large number of States would result in an all round raising of standards in certain spheres of common interest to all nations, such as social conditions, or in an improved regulation of the relations between countries in certain political or technical domains,

such as the maintenance of peace, economic problems, transport, etc. In these latter organisations the preliminary work undertaken by the national government departments, the co-ordinating and constructive action of the permanent international administration and the final process of welding together the materials thus gathered into a serviceable instrument, which is primarily the task of the international conference, are all important factors, the well-balanced interplay of which make for the smooth and efficient working of the machinery created for ensuring international co-operation. The permanent international administration itself is a very vital part of this machinery, since it is the driving-wheel which sets the whole machinery into motion and regulates its speed.

The methods applied in international organisations for drawing up international conventions which are to the community of nations what the laws are to the national communities, are many and varied and it would require a whole volume to describe them all in detail. International administration may indeed be considered as yet in its infancy and the perfect and ideal system still remains to be found. The methods so far put into operation have necessarily had to take into account all the limitations arising out of the ingrained fear of nations to forfeit any part, however small, of their sovereignty and which

explains the shackles by which it was thought necessary to control, not to say impede, the development of existing international institutions.

As an example of a method which has stood the test of time and has proved practicable and effective it may be of use to explain in some detail the system evolved after many years of experimenting by one international organisation for the framing of its conventions.

The Procedures of Single and Double Discussion.

Under this system questions which are to come up for consideration by the international conference are governed either by a procedure of "single discussion" or by a procedure of "double discussion". The various stages of the procedures of single and double discussion are the following :

(a) Single Discussion Procedure :

1. The permanent International Office circulates to Governments a summary report upon the question, containing a statement of the law and practice in the different countries and accompanied by a questionnaire drawn up with a view to the preparation of draft conventions or recommendations. Governments are given three months to prepare their reasoned replies, which should reach the Office as soon as possible and as a general rule six months before the opening of the conference.

2. On the basis of the replies of the Governments the Office draws up a final report, which may contain one or more draft conventions or recommendations. This report is communicated by the Office to the Governments as soon as possible and every effort is made to secure that the report reaches them in no case less than four months before the opening of the conference.

3. The conference when it meets decides whether it will take as the basis of discussion the draft conventions or recommendations prepared by the Office, or whether these drafts shall be considered in full conference or referred to a committee for report. These decisions may be preceded by a debate in full conference on the general principles of the suggested drafts.

4. Further detailed rules determine the procedure to be followed by the conference for the discussion of the draft conventions and recommendations.

(b) Procedure of Double Discussion :

1. Under this procedure the first step is the preparation by the international institution of a preliminary report setting out the law and practice in the different countries in regard to the question at issue, and any other useful information together with a questionnaire. These documents

are despatched to Governments at the earliest possible date, so as to reach them at least six months before the opening of the conference.

2. The Office subsequently submits to the conference the preliminary report referred to above, together with a further report drawn up on the basis of the replies from the Governments and indicating the principal questions which require consideration by the conference. These reports are submitted to a discussion and if the Conference decides that the matter is suitable to form the subject of draft conventions or recommendations, it adopts such conclusions as it sees fit, and may either (a) decide that the question shall be included in the agenda of the following session, or (b) ask the Governing Body of the Office to place the question on the agenda of a later session.

3. On the basis of the replies from Governments to the questionnaire referred to above under (1), and on the basis of the first discussion by the conference, the Office prepares one or more draft conventions or recommendations and transmits them to the Governments, asking them to state within four months whether they have any amendments to suggest or comments to make.

4. On the basis of the replies from Governments the Office draws up a final report containing the text of draft conventions or recommendations, with

any necessary amendments. The report must reach Governments in no case less than three months before the opening of the conference.

5. The further discussion of these texts by the conference is governed by the same rules as in the case of single discussion.

The main features of the procedure set out above are first of all that, according to the urgency of the question, the various stages of its treatment may be carried through either during a single session or extended over two sessions. In the former alternative both the consultation of Governments and the drawing up of draft conventions or recommendations based on their replies take place before the opening of the session of the conference, while in the latter alternative the procedure is divided into two distinct stages, the first leading up to the submission to the conference of a preliminary report on the law and practice in the different countries, together with a report drawn up on the basis of the replies from Governments and indicating the principal questions which require consideration by the conference. What is aimed at by the very wide formula of "indicating questions to the conference" is to avoid tying in advance the hands of the conference in the discussion of the question and the definition of its scope. The outcome of this discussion takes the form of "conclusions",

another wide formula which is intended to leave the utmost latitude for the subsequent preparation by the Office of the draft texts to be submitted to the following session. The second stage of the procedure, which starts after the close of the first session of the conference, is the drawing up by the Office of draft conventions or recommendations on the basis of the materials already at hand — replies from Governments and debates and conclusions of the first session — and their transmission to Governments, which are then requested to state within a given time whether they have any amendments to suggest or comments to make. Subsequently, on the basis of the replies from the Governments, the Office draws up a final report containing the revised texts of draft conventions or recommendations, which come up for final approval before the conference at its following session. An essential condition for the smooth working of this somewhat elaborate but on the whole satisfactory procedure is the strict observance of the various time-limits laid down in the rules governing it. If replies from Governments are unduly late in reaching the Office, the whole mechanism is thrown out of gear and keeping national Government departments up to the mark in this respect is one of the most harrying tasks of the department responsible for the documentary preparation of an international conference working under this system.

The List of Delegates.

One of the documents which is in most urgent request as soon as the conference opens is the List of Delegates, and it is the duty of the permanent administration to see that this list is prepared well in advance and available for the opening of the meeting. The form of such a list naturally varies according to the traditions and needs of each particular organisation. It is usually printed as a separate document in a form which makes it possible without reprinting to include it in the final records of the proceedings. A service of the permanent administration is made responsible for receiving the names of the delegates, whose credentials, to which further reference will be made later on, assume a great variety of forms in a great variety of languages. The names and descriptions of delegates, substitute delegates, advisers and secretaries, are listed in the alphabetical order of countries. If two or more official languages are in use, it may be convenient to print the list of delegates and their titles in each language opposite each other. The translation of titles is often a baffling task, since the institutions of one country have frequently no equivalent in other countries. The provisional list of delegates issued for the opening of the session should also give, whenever possible, the addresses of delegates in the town where the meeting is actually held ; it may also contain the names of the

principal officers of the secretariat of the conference. Delegations should be informed of the name of the official, and the location of his office, to whom any changes in the membership of the delegations should be notified, and a special form may be included for that purpose in the provisional list. Supplements to the list are generally issued after the opening of the meeting as occasion requires, and a revised complete list is issued in due course.

CHAPTER III

ORGANISATION OF THE SECRETARIAT AND MATERIAL ARRANGEMENTS

As the date of opening of the conference looms nearer on the horizon it becomes necessary to go into the question of the organisation of the secretariat and the material arrangements for the holding of the meeting.

Composition of the Secretariat.

In some organisations the constitution specifically stipulates that the head of the central administration becomes, *ex officio*, the *secretary-general* of the general assembly or conference of the organisation. This has the advantage of ensuring the desirable co-ordination between the work of the permanent administration and that of the highest authority of the organisation, while avoiding at the same time any question as to the choice of the secretary-general or the right of the head of the permanent administration to

be present at the meetings of the supreme body. When an international conference is summoned on the initiative of a certain Government or group of Governments, a high official of the Government responsible for the preparatory work is usually appointed by the conference itself to act as its secretary-general.

An Admirable Secretary-General.

The part played by the secretary-general in the running of a conference depends very largely on his own personality. Albert Thomas, the first Director of the International Labour Office, was an admirable secretary-general. Served by a marvellous gift of convincing eloquence, he displayed an extraordinary grasp of both the major issues at stake and of the most minute details of the daily routine of the conference. He knew when the boat could safely be let drift along moved by an easy breeze, but quicker than anyone else did he scent the gathering storm, which he would either manage to elude or, if necessary, face with a firm hand on the helm. On one memorable occasion when pandemonium was threatening, he silenced an over-excited delegate who, having previously handed his powers to a substitute, happened to have returned and was interfering out of order, by saying to the delegate in question in an unexpectedly forceful tone :

"You may shout until you raise the roof but it will not change the fact that you are '*Absent*'".¹

The G. H. Q.

The secretary-general may be aided by one or more *assistant secretary-generals*, who are usually the higher officials of the permanent international administration. This small body of persons constitutes the general staff, which is responsible for the orderly progress of the work of the conference. It may be found expedient to place directly under their authority *legal advisers* and a small group of officials who will act as *representatives of the secretary-general* in the various committees set up by the conference and report daily to the secretary-general on the progress of the work of the committees and on any special difficulties which may arise.

The Administrative Services.

The administrative services of the secretariat which it may be found expedient to place under the control of a *principal secretary* may include the following departments :

1. *A Secretariat of Committees.* It is usual to attach to large committees a secretary for each

¹ Albert Thomas' career as an international official has been brilliantly told by Mr. E. J. Phelan in his book "*Yes and Albert Thomas*". (The Cresset Press, London.)

of the official languages in use. If it is to be foreseen that the committee will at some stage split up into several sub-committees meeting simultaneously, it may be well to provide it from the outset with a double or triple team of secretaries, whose duties it will be to draft the minutes of the sittings in the different languages, prepare and circulate before each sitting the amendments handed in by members, and at a later stage of the work of the committee assist the reporter in the drafting of the report of the committee. A *clerk* in charge of the distribution of documents and a *messenger* should also be placed at the disposal of each large committee.

2. An *Interpretation Service*, which may be placed under a *chief interpreter*, should include teams of interpreters for the various languages in use at the conference. The standard of interpretation expected nowadays in international conferences is extremely high and therefore great care should be taken in the selection of the interpreters. Very unpleasant incidents and even major diplomatic crises may be easily caused by inadequate or misleading interpretations. Most speakers are very touchy on this point and require gentle handling. An instance may be recalled when a distinguished delegate delivered what he regarded as the most epoch-making speech of his career, but, owing to

his defective mastery of the French language and an equally defective elocution, the official whose duty it was to give an interpretation of the speech was completely at a loss when called upon to do so. Obeying, however, a peremptory order from his chief, he improvised with the morsels he had picked up, as good a rendering as possible. But that was not the end of his worries. The delegate in question then insisted on securing the typescript text of his speech, but when the head of the reporting staff was requested to produce it, no such typescript copy was found to exist, because the parliamentary reporters had failed to catch any coherent sentence. The harassed interpreter was then called on to piece together his interpretation in writing; this text was then translated into French and handed to the delegate, who apparently was perfectly satisfied and hastened to wire the speech to his Government.

The usual practice is to attach to large conferences or committees at least one interpreter for each main language, and possibly also interpreters for other languages, who sit close to any delegate or delegates unable to follow the debates in the main languages and translate the speeches for them *sotto voce*.

It is essential that interpreters should possess not only a very thorough knowledge of the written and spoken languages from and into which they

are called upon to interpret but also be fully conversant with the subjects that are to be discussed. In this connection experience has shown that it generally pays for an organisation to provide its conferences with its own trained interpreters, even though the meeting be held at a considerable distance from the seat of the organisation.

The Right Man in the Right Place.

A case may be quoted when, for a conference of statisticians, a well-known travelling agency was charged with recruiting the interpreting staff on the spot, the idea being to avoid the not inconsiderable expenses entailed in bringing trained interpreters from the seat of the organisation. The result was disastrous, for the interpreters who had been recruited, excellent though they doubtless were for conducting caravans of begoggled sight-seers, floundered hopelessly in the pitfalls which intricate statistical theories offered them.

In addition to the knowledge of languages and of the subjects to be discussed, certain natural gifts are required to be a good interpreter. Perhaps the most amazing instance of facility of interpretation is that of a certain lady-interpreter who used to be a familiar figure at all the international conferences held during the early 'twenties. Without taking a note, but listening in rapt attention, she could render the speeches either in Italian, English

or French word for word and from beginning to end. Such power of memorising is, however, exceptional, and the average interpreter will do well to take notes upon which he can rely.

Opinions sometimes differ as to whether the interpreter should take his notes in the language in which the speech is delivered or in the language to be used for the translation. When the latter language is the mother-tongue or principal second language of the interpreter, it will probably be found the easiest to take notes in that language, while if necessary jotting down here and there a few difficult words or expressions in the original language used by the orator. On the other hand, when the language into which the speech is to be translated is not one in which the interpreter feels quite at home, the safest is to take notes in the language used by the speaker. It may be added that the interpretations of speeches are expected to be summaries and not literal translations.

A Modern Miracle.

In recent years a system of simultaneous telephonic interpretation of speeches has been applied in international conferences with great success. Each interpreter on duty sits in a sound-proof cabin, through the window of which he can observe the happenings in the conference hall. The cabins are fitted with a pair of headphones and a micro-

phone. The interpreter hears the speech through the receivers and immediately translates it, sentence by sentence, into the microphone. The seat of each delegate and adviser, and possibly also the seats in the press and diplomatic galleries, are equipped with a telephonic apparatus, by the aid of which can be heard either an amplified reproduction of the speech on the platform or an interpretation of the speech into certain other languages. The apparatus consists of a pair of headphones, a knob for regulating the volume, and a moveable switch with a dial numbered from 1 to 8, each number corresponding to a particular telephonic circuit. Line No. 1 is reserved exclusively for the amplification of speeches, while the other lines are used for interpretation into different languages. The desired language is found by moving the switch round the dial. The application of this system has proved practicable especially in the case of discussions of an orderly and continuous character, such as the discussion on the report of the chief of the permanent administration. In order to facilitate the task of the interpreters, delegates who intend to speak from a written text should be requested to hand it to the head interpreter an hour or two in advance.

3. *The Verbatim Record Service.* The verbatim record of the speeches delivered at the plenary

sittings may be prepared in the form of a roneographed provisional text which is distributed to delegates as soon as possible after the meeting, and which, when the corrections suggested by members have been duly made, is printed as the final text of the Verbatim Record.

Another method is to distribute daily, or as occasion arises, in printed form, a Provisional Record which includes reports of all the speeches and interpretations at plenary sittings, the text of reports of committees and other documents of interest to delegates. A final record is printed subsequently and despatched to delegates at their home addresses after the close of the session.

In some conferences it is the practice to publish in other languages than the official languages summarised versions of the provisional record. These have proved to be of great assistance in enabling delegates from the countries concerned to follow effectually the proceedings. The staff of the provisional record service should be composed of officials especially capable of working in the languages in which the record is issued and with experience in printing and publishing.

4. *The Clerk of the conference* holds a position of his own. He acts as secretary to the plenary sittings of the conference and is the person to whom delegates apply for all matters relating to the

procedure in full sittings. He receives the names of those who wish to speak and keeps an up-to-date list of the orators for the convenience of the President and of any other persons who may wish to consult it. To him also are handed in the texts of proposals and amendments to be discussed in a plenary sitting, a set of which he has available for the President at the appropriate time. During plenary sittings the President may instruct the Clerk either to make announcements regarding questions of procedure, or the programme of work of the conference, or to read the text of proposals, or the composition of committees. When a record vote is taken, the Clerk calls the names of delegates and, with the help of one or more assistants, registers the votes, counts them and hands the result of the voting to the President who announces it to the conference.

5. Another essential department is the *Information and Press Service*. Propaganda is nowadays universally recognised as one of the most powerful means of spurring people on to action and no great human modern venture can be conceived without a certain measure of publicity. Perhaps one of the reasons why it has not yet been found possible to make the ideal of peace prevail over the forces working for war is that men have not succeeded in imparting to this ideal a suffi-

ciently strong appeal. The importance, if not necessarily the final outcome, of a conference other than a purely technical conference may well be gauged by the echo it finds in the press of the world. Any well-appointed conference should therefore have its press department, whose duties it is to keep the outside world informed of the issues at stake and the progress of the work. This department should be adequately staffed so as to enable its officials to report daily on the debates of the full conference and of each large committee. Its business is also to facilitate the work of journalists, cinema operators and photographers duly accredited to the conference by placing at their disposal all the relevant papers and posting up in the press room a stenographic transcript of the speeches delivered at the plenary sittings. Nor must cartoonists be forgotten, for it is they who add the lighter touch, thus often relieving a tense situation. Journalists have a noble but nerve-racking profession and have a claim to patience. An efficient clerk with a winning manner can do much to keep the conference on good terms with the press.

6. Another important cogwheel of the machinery of any international conference is the *Information Office*. When a delegate arrives at the main entrance door of the conference hall he is directed first of all to the information office, where his

name and address are duly checked. He is then handed a permanent entrance card and given all the necessary information. It is also at this office that ordinary visitors apply to obtain cards allowing them to attend the plenary sittings, either in the diplomatic gallery or in the gallery reserved for the public. For meetings of a highly political character which attract a great number of visitors, and for which special safety precautions have to be taken, it may be advisable to draw up detailed regulations concerning the delivery of entrance cards and the access to the conference hall.

The information office may also be made responsible for keeping a record of the dates of luncheons, dinners and other functions, for the information of delegations desirous of securing a date for their own arrangements. This department, which may be called upon to answer the most unexpected questions, from the name of the best hairdresser in town to the solution of a subtle point of international social etiquette, should be run by persons speaking fluently the languages in use at the conference and equally well acquainted with the geography of the town, its resources and the working of the conference.

7. The *Distribution Service* is the indispensable purveyor of all those who are taking part in the conference. It must be abundantly stocked with

copies of the publications issued by the permanent institution, as well as of all the documents pertaining to the work of the conference: list of delegates, booklet containing the constitution and rules, copies of the provisional record, daily journal or bulletin — which is as a rule distributed every evening at the addresses of delegates — minutes and reports of committees, etc. It may be convenient to include in the first provisional issue of the list of delegates a form which members are requested to fill up and hand in to the distribution service in the event of any correction or completion of an entry in the list being necessary. At the close of the session delegates should be requested to give their home addresses to the distribution service for the despatch of any remaining papers.

8. The *Typewriting and Reporting Service*, or, as it is usually called, the Pool, may be compared to the stokehole of a ship, where inconspicuous but hard work is being done. On its smooth and efficient working largely depends the success of the conference. The number and qualifications of its staff are necessarily determined by the importance and character of the conference and the languages in use. The staff of this service is as a rule divided into parliamentary reporters, who take the shorthand notes of the debates in full sittings, first and second-class stenographers and

copyists. A suitable team of persons corresponding to these grades should be available for each of the official languages in use.

When telephonic interpretation is made use of, the number of parliamentary reporters and stenographers typing under their dictation has to be considerably increased, because the rhythm of the succession of speeches is much more rapid. Smaller teams working in other languages than the official languages are also necessary and their numbers must be in proportion to the call likely to be made upon their services. An important sub-section of the Pool is the multigraph and roneograph services, with their operators and up-to-date machinery.

When a big international conference is in full swing, and minutes, reports and communiqués are being issued all day long, the Pool's work begins early in the morning and at times ceases only late at night, if not in the early hours of dawn. It is therefore necessary to recruit a staff sufficiently numerous to make it possible to divide it into shifts which can relay one another. The typewriting and reporting service should be placed under the orders of a responsible official who has the gift of inspiring his staff with enthusiasm and enforcing discipline and can cope with emergencies while being also capable of exercising a judicious control over the suitability, political or otherwise, of issuing documents sent to the service for reproduction.

9. *The Accountant's Office.* This is for obvious reasons an essential part of the secretariat. The running of a large conference entails the recruiting of a numerous temporary staff whose salaries have to be paid at the end of each week. When travelling expenses and subsistence allowances are paid to delegates by the institution itself the duty of converting the various amounts indicated by the members on the forms in perhaps a score of different national currencies into the currency or currencies in which they desire the sums to be paid out is by no means an easy job. Indeed, the tact and firmness of the chief accountant are very often put to a severe test.

10. *The Steward's Office,* the duties of which are those of an efficient housekeeper, controls the internal services. Before the opening of a session it is its business to see that the premises are suitably equipped. While the conference is in session it is responsible for all the lighting, cleaning and heating arrangements, as well as for the organisation of the motorcar and messenger services.

Premises.

A perfectly composed and trained crew without a ship for it to man would not be of much use, and therefore, side by side with the steps taken for the organisation of the secretariat, it is necessary to

secure suitable premises in which the conference can be held. The size and arrangement of these premises will of course depend upon the importance of the attendance and the needs of the conference in regard to committee rooms, offices and other facilities. Most permanent international institutions have their own assembly hall, in which case the holding of large conferences requires but few preparatory arrangements as to the premises. In other cases, the conference has to be entirely organised in a town chosen *ad hoc*, where suitable premises have to be found and arranged, often at very short notice. In that event it is by no means a waste of money to send in advance of the main party an official of the permanent institution concerned to assist the local authorities in arranging the premises.

A Typical Conference Hall.

A description may now be given of a typical conference hall and of the usual facilities which are made available for large conferences. First of all, the assembly hall itself. At one end of it is the platform, on which there is a table with the president's seat, and on either side of it another seat, one for the chief of the permanent administration acting as secretary-general to the conference and the other for the president's secretary. In front of the president's platform and slightly below it is the

speaker's rostrum, and in this connection, delegates should be asked not to speak from their places but to come up to the platform and speak from the rostrum in front of the microphone.

Stemming the flow of eloquence of certain delegates who, being the mouth-piece of their Government, cannot always limit the length of their speeches, is often the president's unpleasant but inescapable duty. It may therefore be found convenient to equip the desk on the speaker's rostrum with a dull glass panel in which the warning "time up" appears when the speaker's allotted time has elapsed. Thirty seconds later a bell will be sounded to remind the speaker that he must bring his speech to an end. On the right and left hand sides of the speaker's rostrum are tables for the interpreters and the Clerk of the conference, to whom delegates wishing to speak should hand in their names. In front of the speaker's rostrum and at a lower level are the tables for the parliamentary reporters. Both the president's table and the speaker's rostrum are equipped with microphones for the amplification of speeches. In the body of the hall are the desks for the delegates, provided with the traditional blotters and with telephonic apparatus for listening to the interpretation of speeches if this system is in use. It is customary to arrange the seats in the alphabetical order of the names of the countries in one of the official language-

ges in use at the conference, and to inverse this order at the following session so that the same delegates will not be always seated in the back rows. Sitting accommodation is also reserved for substitute delegates or advisers and secretaries of delegations in galleries running round three sides of the hall or immediately behind the seats allotted to regular delegates.

When the working of the conference implies the taking of many record votes, it may be useful to install behind the president's platform a *vote indicator*. It is an apparatus comprising three coloured luminous panels — red for votes in favour (YES), blue for votes against (NO) and white for abstentions. As each delegate announces his vote the clerk of the conference repeats aloud what he has heard and presses a switch so that one of the panels lights up to indicate a vote for or against or abstention, and the delegate concerned can thus check the accuracy of the recording of his vote.

The Lobby.

Just outside the main assembly hall is the lobby, where are generally found the information office, the distribution service, a conference notice-board, lockers (one for each delegation) in which delegates may keep their papers, a travelling agency and money exchange office, a post, telephone and telegraph office, a newspaper and book stall, and

possibly a first-aid post, not forgetting the cloak-rooms. The indispensable bar and tea-room, to which delegates, journalists and visitors alike have access and without which it is difficult to imagine a successful conference, should not be located too far from the assembly hall, since at a moment's notice delegates may be summoned by the whip of their delegation or group to attend the meeting and cast their vote.

Committee Rooms.

The number and size of the committee rooms which should be available will of course depend upon the number of committees to be set up and their membership. The topography of a large building is often bewildering to the newcomer and it may therefore be useful to distribute a sketch plan showing the location of the principal rooms and the means of access to them, and to put up at suitable places in the building posters and arrows showing the way. Committee rooms are equipped either with desks arranged in rows or with tables disposed in the form of a horseshoe, or with one long rectangular table. Smaller tables should also be available for the secretaries, interpreters and the clerk in charge of papers. A messenger is usually attached to each large committee.

The number of offices to be made available for the secretariat depends on whether the staff has its own permanent rooms on or not far from the premises of the conference or whether it has to be entirely housed within the conference building. In the latter case extensive accommodation will be required for the various services of the secretariat. Rooms will have to be provided for the secretary-general, and the assistant secretary-generals and their private secretaries and the other chief officials, the secretaries of committees, who may have to work very late at night, the interpreters, the staff of the provisional record service or services, the steward's and accountant's offices, and last, but not least, the typewriting and roneographing departments, which especially require adequate accommodation.

Let us now suppose that every member of the crew is at his or her appointed post, that the ship, scrubbed and rigged, is awaiting the scheduled time for its departure.

CHAPTER IV

THE INTERNAL WORKING
OF THE CONFERENCE

The first plenary sitting of an important conference usually opens towards the latter part of a morning, but long before the fixed time of opening the conference building is bustling with activity. The greater part of the staff has been on the spot from an early hour, putting the final touches to the arrangements, and last-minute instructions are given in jerky tones betraying slight nervousness. Busy officials are scurrying to and fro with papers in their hands, while in the assembly hall itself messengers and clerks are filling the inkstands, arranging the blotters or placing the traditional carafe and glass on the speaker's rostrum.

The Opening Sitting.

As the time for the opening of the meeting approaches motorcars, bearing the different flags of the delegations, come streaming up at the main entrance door and delegates, advisers, secre-

taries, often accompanied by members of their families, alight from the cars. Military guards or policemen in full dress uniform stand to attention, wearing that fixed expression reminiscent of the wax figures at the one time famous Madame Tussaud's. Detectives in plain clothes hover about, unconsciously bearing the stamp of their profession. Soon the lobby is humming with the voices of the gathering throng. Veterans recognise old friends, and hearty greetings are exchanged. Newcomers, looking a little self-conscious, are taken round by their elders to be introduced to other delegates. Here and there on the drab background of European clothes the vivid colours of a far-eastern delegate's costume add brighter tones. Delegates, having located their seats on the sketch plan posted up at the entrance to the assembly hall, gradually occupy their places. When the time at last comes for the opening of the meeting, a bell is rung and solemn-looking gentlemen ascend the platform.

The first sitting is usually opened by the chairman of the executive body of the permanent institution, who in his address reviews the chief happenings in the life of the institution since the previous meeting. First of all, if appropriate, he pays a tribute to the memory of the members who have passed away during the intervening period. He will then extend a welcome to the delegates

from the numerous countries, and a salute to the representatives of the authorities of the country in which the conference is being held. He next gives particulars as to the number and size of the delegations attending the session, and may refer to their representative character emphasised by the fact that so many responsible ministers are representing their countries. He will then outline in some detail the programme of the work of the session, stressing the relative importance of each item and its bearing on the political, economic or social background of the moment. With a final expression of confidence in the successful results of the labours of the delegates he then formally declares the session open.

The Election of the President.

The next business on the agenda is the election of the president. Whether or not fixed rules govern the procedure for the election of the president, it is the established practice to prepare this election by means of unofficial consultations, in order to avoid an unseemly scramble at the opening session, and to secure the choice of the person best fitted to perform the duties of this high office. When a conference is held in a certain country on the invitation of its Government, it is customary to elect as president a representative national from that country. In permanent institutions with a

wide membership it may moreover be found necessary to introduce a certain rotation in the choice of the president, and special provisions may be included for that purpose in the rules of procedure.

Selecting the right man to take the chair is a delicate operation. The president is expected to possess many qualities. First of all, it is desirable that he should be a person whose authority is undisputed and whose personality will lend prestige to the session. He should also have some parliamentary experience and preferably some knowledge of the languages in which the debates are to be held. Presence of mind is also an invaluable quality in a president which may sometimes be put to a sudden test. A well-known and striking example of presence of mind was given in the sphere of national politics by that president of the French Chamber who, after a bomb had been thrown from the gallery during a sitting, stilled an incipient panic by uttering the magic words : “ Messieurs, la séance continue ”. Another example of presence of mind was given by Prince Bismarck at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, when he averted a major political crisis by suddenly adjourning the meeting after he had heard — and alone understood the English pronunciation of latin — Lord Beaconsfield, the British representative, saying that a certain suggestion which had just been put forward would be regarded by his Government as a *casus belli*.

Less serious incidents may at any moment occur and may require prompt action on the part of the president. One of the most successful presidents who took the chair at the early International Labour Conferences held at Geneva was a member of the British House of Lords. Endowed with a stately presence, a keen intellect, and possessing a great experience of parliamentary procedure, he ruled over the conference like an Eastern deity with undisputed authority. In a perfectly modulated but impressive voice he rolled out with great effectiveness the traditional formulae in use for centuries in the British Parliament. Perhaps more than anybody, he contributed to establish that reputation for firmness and almost dictatorial authority with which English chairmen came to be credited in international assemblies, and which on one occasion roused a powerful French workers' delegate to protest that : " Even under an English chairman one had a right to speak ! ". On another occasion an ugly scuffle burst out in the back of the conference hall during the always tense discussion on the approval of the credentials of a certain workers' delegate. After the noise had abated, the president in question arose and majestically uttered the words : " I order the Clerk of the conference to make an enquiry into the incident and report to me thereupon ". The soothing effect of the tone in which these simple words were pronounced was

immediate and the proceedings went on without further disturbance.

The president's candidature may be formally put forward either by a nominations committee, which is set up at the very beginning of each session, or individually by a delegate, whose proposal may be supported by several other delegates. The actual election may take place either as a result of a vote by a show of hands or by means of the more formal procedure of a vote by secret ballot.

The President's Opening Address.

Upon his election, the president is expected to deliver an address. Some presidents compose this address themselves, while others, especially when they do not master one of the official languages in use, rely upon a draft written out in advance by the permanent officials. Even in this matter surprises do sometimes occur, and the instance may be recalled of a distinguished minister of a far-eastern country whose election to the chair was an open secret, and who, although he had the text of his address in his pocket, announced immediately after his election that he would deliver his speech at the beginning of the following sitting, thus throwing out of joint the elaborately worked out timetable for the day's work. With characteristic Eastern politeness he apparently desired to avoid

conveying the impression that he took his election so much for granted that he had a ready-made speech for the occasion.

The president's address may be drafted on the following lines : In the first instance, he expresses his deep appreciation for the honour conferred upon him, an honour which he accepts as a tribute to the country which he represents, and expresses his thanks to those who proposed and supported his election. He then may emphasise the share taken by his country in the work of the organisation concerned and its national record in the particular field under consideration. Next he may discuss the general problems of the moment and their bearing on the agenda of the meeting, winding up by a renewed expression of thanks and of hope for a fruitful outcome of the deliberations.

The Election of the Vice-Presidents.

After the election of the president, the next most urgent matters to be dealt with are the election of the vice-presidents and the setting up of certain committees whose work is essential to the normal functioning of the conference.

The vice-presidents, whose number may vary according to the importance of the attendance, are sometimes proposed by the nominations committee to which reference has already been made, or may be nominated by the groups composing the confe-

rence, for example, Government, employers' and workers' groups, subject to approval by the full conference. Under the latter system, in order to avoid that two or more of the persons elected to fill the offices of president and vice-presidents be of the same nationality, it may be expedient to prescribe that a certain order shall be followed for making these nominations, and that this order shall vary at each session. If the organisation is composed, say, of the three independent groups mentioned above, the rules may lay down that the groups shall have priority of nomination in the following rotation: Government group, employers' group, workers' group, beginning with the group indicated by lot at a particular session, and that if a group nominates a vice-president of the same nationality as the vice-president nominated by a group possessing priority of nomination, such nomination shall be void.

The Duties of the President and Vice-Presidents.

The duties of the president have been defined in the regulations of one large international organisations as follows:

- (1) The president shall declare the opening and the close of the sittings. Before proceeding to the agenda he shall bring before the meeting any communications which may concern it.

- (2) He shall direct the debates, maintain order, ensure the observance of the Standing Orders by such means as circumstances may demand, grant or withdraw the right to address the conference, put questions to the vote and announce the result of the vote.
- (3) The president shall not take part in the debates and shall not vote. If he is himself a delegate, he may appoint a substitute.
- (4) In the absence of the president during a sitting or any part thereof, one of the vice-presidents, taken in rotation, shall preside.
- (5) A vice-president acting as president shall have the same rights and duties as the president.

The president and vice-presidents, sometimes described as the Officers of the conference, although they have no very clearly defined duties as a body, may nevertheless be called upon to play a very important part in certain circumstances. First of all, the president and vice-presidents are usually *ex officio* members of the directing organ of the conference, of which more will be said below. They are, moreover, a convenient body to which recourse can be had whenever it seems desirable, by courtesy or for reasons of political expediency, to give a hearing to the representatives of outside bodies who have no official standing at the conference,

without thereby creating the dangerous precedent of giving these representatives direct access to the platform of the conference. If an incident or a major political crisis occur, possibly threatening to wreck the conference or at least to cause serious bad blood among certain delegations, it is frequently to the Officers, as representing the highest and most impartial authority of the conference, that the matter is referred for the purpose of finding a way out of the impasse.

The Credentials Committee.

It is hardly possible to imagine an important international conference without certain organs whose function it is to set the whole machine into motion and control its working. These organs are generally created at the very beginning of the session. One of them is the *credentials committee*, whose duty it is to verify the credentials of delegates, substitutes and advisers appointed to attend the conference. Any delegation attending an official international conference must have credentials, just as the shareholders of a company must secure a certificate proving their ownership of shares, to be entitled to take part in the general meeting of the company. The credentials are an official deed attesting that the person whose name it bears has been regularly appointed by the national competent

authority to attend the conference, and is entitled to act validly within the limits of the powers conferred upon him.

The Form of Credentials and the Authority which Delivers them.

Credentials should normally take the form of official instruments, but nomination by letter or even telegram, though not in accordance with customary diplomatic procedure, may nevertheless be accepted. The constitution of the organisation or its rules of procedure generally prescribe that the credentials or full powers of delegates, substitutes and advisers shall be communicated to the head of the permanent administration before the opening of the session and may fix a definite time-limit — a week or a fortnight — for such communication.

The authorities which deliver the credentials vary considerably from country to country. In many cases they are conferred by the head of the State or an authority holding similar powers, while in others they emanate from the Minister for Foreign Affairs or the minister competent in the matters dealt with by the international organisation concerned.

Curious mishaps do sometimes occur in connection with credentials and a case in point was when

the delegation of a great Power arrived to attend an international conference without any credentials, this formality having apparently been overlooked by an old and experienced national administration, at a time when there was still but little experience of the mechanism of international conferences. The delegation in question was not a little dumb-founded when it was informed that the lack of credentials deprived it of any legal status at the conference. This slip could fortunately be easily remedied and credentials in due form secured by the delegation before the opening of the session.

Since the credentials committee can only be set up and submit its first report some time after the opening of the session, in order to expedite matters the rules of procedure may provide that the chairman of the executive body of the organisation shall draw up a provisional report on credentials and that this report, with the credentials, shall be open to inspection by the delegates some time before the beginning of the session and published as an appendix to the record of the first sitting. This practice, which enables all members to take cognisance of the credentials of their fellow delegates, is of special practical value where a definite procedure is foreseen in the rules concerning objections to nominations, the regularity of which is disputed.

The Composition of the Credentials Committee.

The credentials committee is for obvious reasons the first committee to be constituted at any conference, since upon its conclusions depends the formal recognition of the validity of the composition of the conference. In order to facilitate the setting up of this committee, the rules may provide that the president of the executive body, acting as president of the conference, shall take the initiative of making proposals for the election of the credentials committee. The full conference is of course the competent authority to verify the credentials and take a final decision as to their validity, but their actual examination is performed by the credentials committee. This committee is generally a small body of three or five persons, chosen among the delegates, preferably persons with a legal training. It submits a first report to the full conference as soon as possible. When the constitution or the rules provide for a quorum, the reports of the credentials committee determine on the basis of the number of the persons regularly attending the conference the necessary quorum to give validity to a vote.

Disputes in regard to Credentials.

It very seldom occurs in ordinary international conferences that the credentials of delegates are

questioned, and the adoption of the report of the credentials committee is as a rule a pure matter of form. But in an organisation composed of representatives of different and possibly conflicting interests, the main function of which is the conciliation of these interests, strict compliance with the rules laid down for the nomination of delegates is an essential condition for its satisfactory working. Article 3 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation may be quoted in this connection. Under this provision, Members of the Organisation undertake to nominate delegates and advisers representing respectively the employers and the workpeople, chosen in agreement with the industrial organisations if such organisations exist, which are most representative of employers or workpeople, as the case may be, in their respective countries. Practically at every one of the twenty-five sessions which the International Labour Conference has held since its creation, objections have been raised concerning the credentials of certain delegates and these objections have been in almost all cases based on the claim that the nominations had not been made in accordance with the conditions laid down by the above provision. It must be said that, owing to the complexity and variety of national conditions, it is often by no means an easy task for the credentials committee and the conference itself to

form an opinion as to whether, in each particular case, that provision has been strictly observed.

An Advisory Opinion from the Permanent Court of International Justice.

As a matter of fact, the International Labour Conference was led, at an early session, to initiate steps for securing an advisory opinion from the Permanent Court of International Justice on the question of the interpretation of the provision of the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation previously referred to and which lays down that : " The Members undertake to nominate non-Government delegates and advisers chosen in agreement with the industrial organisations, if such organisations exist, which are most representative of employers or workpeople, as the case may be, in their respective countries ". The particular case to which the interpretation was to apply was the appointment of a workers' delegate for the Netherlands at the third session of the International Labour Conference. The Netherlands Government, after an attempt to bring about an agreement between the principal labour organisations of the country for the appointment of the delegate, had appointed the common nominee of three organisations, whereupon the fourth and numerically the most important organisation, the Netherlands Confederation of Trade Unions, lodged

a formal protest against the said appointment. The point at issue was to ascertain whether the action taken by the Netherlands Government was in accordance with the above-mentioned provision of the Constitution. Since the method of procedure, consisting in appointing delegates to an international conference in agreement with the most representative organisations of a certain branch of activity or a certain class of persons, a method which has proved such a source of strength in the International Labour Organisation, may well become a feature common to many international organisations of the future, it would seem desirable to mention below the essential points of the opinion expressed by the Permanent Court on the question submitted to it :

The General Conference of Representatives of the Members of the International Labour Organisation is composed of four representatives of each of the Members, of whom two are to be Government Delegates and the two others are to be Delegates representing respectively the employers and the workpeople of each of the Members.

There is no limitation upon the freedom of choice by the Government in appointing the two Government Delegates, but with regard to the choice of the non-Government Delegates a limitation is imposed. By the third paragraph of Article 3 of the Constitution, the Members undertake that, if industrial organisations exist in the country, the Member shall nominate non-Government Delegates

chosen in agreement with the industrial organisations which are most representative of employers or workpeople, as the case may be, in their respective countries.

The engagement contained in the third paragraph is not a mere moral obligation. It is a part of the Constitution and constitutes an obligation by which the Members are bound to one another.

The obligation is that the persons nominated should have been chosen in agreement with the organisations most representative of employers or workpeople, as the case may be. There is no definition of the word "representative" in the Constitution. The most representative organisations for this purpose are, of course, those organisations which best represent the employers and the workers respectively. What these organisations are, is a question to be decided in the particular case, having regard to the circumstances in each particular country at the time when the choice falls to be made. Numbers are not the only test of the representative character of the organisations, but they are an important factor; other things being equal, the most numerous will be the most representative. The Article throws upon the Government of the State the duty of deciding, on the data at its disposal, what organisations are, in point of fact, the most representative. Its decision on this question may, however, be reviewed under the seventh paragraph of this Article, and the Conference has the power, by a two-thirds majority, to refuse to admit any Delegate whom it deems not to have been nominated in accordance with the Article. Such a refusal to admit may be based on

any grounds, either of fact or law, which satisfy the Conference that the Delegates have not been so nominated.

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It was suggested that the third paragraph of Article 3 spoke of organisations in the plural, only because it was dealing with the case of the employers as well as with the case of the workers, and that what was meant was that the Government, in nominating the Employers' Delegate, should proceed in agreement with the views of the one organisation most important amongst those representative of the employers, and in choosing the Workers' Delegate in accordance with the views of the one organisation most important amongst those representative of the workers. The Court cannot accept this interpretation.

The view maintained by the Netherlands Confederation is not sufficiently supported by the text of the Article, and it is at all events obvious that the ideas inspiring the provisions of paragraph 3 clearly demonstrate that the only possible construction that can be given to the word "organisation" is that the plural refers as well to employers' as to workers' organisations.

In accordance with the terms of the first paragraph of Article 3, the Workers' Delegate represents all workers belonging to a particular Member. The only object of the intervention of industrial organisations, in connection with the selection of Delegates and technical advisers, is to ensure, as far as possible, that the Governments should nominate persons whose opinions are in harmony with the opinions of employers and workers respectively.

If, therefore, in a particular country there exist several industrial organisations representing the working classes, the Government must take all of them into consideration, when it is proceeding to the nomination of the Workers' Delegate and his technical advisers. Only by acting in this way can the Government succeed in choosing persons who, having regard to the particular circumstances, will be able to represent at the Conference the views of the working classes concerned.

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It has been contended that it would be advantageous if the Delegate were to represent a single organisation and not a group of organisations, whose policies may differ. The Court confines itself to observing that no suggestion to the effect that only one organisation should be represented is anywhere to be found in the Constitution, which, on the contrary, expressly refers, in the first paragraph of Article 3, to the representation of the workers of each particular country.

The Netherlands Confederation of Trade Unions has also contended that, even admitting that the text of paragraph 3 of Article 3 purports to include several workers' and employers' organisations, the Delegate was not nominated in accordance with the provisions of the paragraph in question, because an agreement with three organisations, which do not include the most numerous organisation, is not an agreement with *the* most representative organisations. The meaning of this appears to be that if the plural construction of the text is adopted, the agreement should be made with all the most representative organisations. Even admitting that

such an interpretation is reconcilable with the letter of paragraph 3 of Article 3, it is clearly inadmissible. In order to realise this, it will suffice to point out that the construction in question would make it possible, in opposition to the wishes of the great majority of workers, for one single organisation to prevent the reaching of an agreement. A construction which would have this result must be rejected.

The aim of each Government must, of course, be an agreement with all the most representative organisations of employers and workers as the case may be ; that, however, is only an ideal which it is extremely difficult to attain, and which cannot, therefore, be considered as the normal case and that contemplated in paragraph 3 of Article 3.

What is required of the Governments is that they should do their best to effect an agreement, which, in the circumstances, may be regarded as the best for the purpose of ensuring the representation of the workers of the country.

This is precisely what the Netherlands Government did, when, after failing to reach an agreement with all the industrial organisations which it regarded as the most representative, it nominated the Workers' Delegate in agreement with the organisations, which, taken together, included a majority of the organised workers of the country. This does not mean that the fortuitous and temporary combination of three different organisations was treated by the Netherlands Government as a single organisation which, *ipso facto*, had become the most representative in place of the Netherlands Confederation of Trade Unions. Such a fiction is

in no way necessary in order to explain and justify the action taken by the Government.

Suggested Rules for the Verification of Credentials.

It is obviously impossible to draw up stereotyped rules applicable in all cases and to all international conferences for the verification of the credentials of delegates. In order, however, to give a general idea of the lines along which such rules may be drafted, the following provisions, which have operated effectively in one large international organisation, are given by way of example :

1. The credentials of delegates and their advisers shall be subject to scrutiny by the conference which may, by two-thirds of the votes cast by the delegates present, refuse to admit any delegate or adviser whom it deems not to have been nominated in accordance with this article ;

2. The credentials of delegates and their advisers shall be deposited with the . . . (name of the permanent institution) at least 15 days before the date fixed for the opening of the Session of the Conference. A brief report upon these credentials, drawn up by the Chairman of the . . . (name of the permanent institution) shall, with the credentials, be open to inspection by the delegates on the day before the opening of the Session of the Conference. This report shall be published as an appendix to the record of the first sitting ;

3. Any objections raised concerning the nomination of delegates or advisers shall be lodged with the officers of the Conference and transmitted by

them to the Committee charged with the verification of credentials ;

4. Any objection which is not lodged with the Officers of the Conference within three clear days of the opening of the Session of the Conference shall be null and void. In the case of credentials which, on account of very exceptional circumstances, are not deposited in time to be dealt with in the brief report referred to in paragraph 2 above, the period of three days shall run from the date of the publication of the names of the delegates in the Provisional Record of the Session ;

5. Nevertheless, where an objection is lodged concerning a delegation from a distant country and correspondence would therefore be subject to considerable delay, the said objection will be admissible up to the date of the drafting of the final report.

6. Objections the authors of which remain anonymous, and objections based upon facts or allegations which the Conference, by a debate and a decision referring to identical facts or allegations, has already discussed and recognised to be irrelevant or devoid of substance, shall not be receivable.

7. Pending final decision of the question of his admission, any delegate or adviser to whose nomination objection has been taken shall have the same rights as other Delegates and advisers.

8. The Conference shall elect a Committee to verify the credentials of delegates and advisers. The Committee shall consist of . . . (the composition of the Committee will depend upon the nature and size of the Conference).

9. The Credentials Committee shall consider whether any objections which may have been submitted concerning the nomination of delegates or advisers satisfy the conditions of receivability defined above. If the Committee reaches a unanimous conclusion as to the receivability of an objection, its decision shall be final. If the Credentials Committee does not reach a unanimous conclusion, the Conference shall, without further discussion, decide whether the objection is receivable, on being furnished with a record of the discussions which took place in the Committee, together with a report in which is set forth the opinion of the majority and minority of its members.

10. The Credentials Committee shall consider whether objections concerning the nomination of delegates or advisers which have been declared receivable are well founded, and shall submit an immediate report to the Conference on the cases referred to either in the report of the Chairman of the . . . (name of the permanent institution) provided for in Article 3, or in the individual objections which have been considered receivable.

The General or Selection Committee.

Besides the credentials committee, an equally essential organ of any international conference is the committee usually known as the *general committee* or *selection committee*, which is responsible for the general direction of the work of the conference, the formulating of proposals in regard to the constitution of committees and their com-

position, and the fixing of the dates and agenda of plenary sittings. The composition of this committee, the importance of which is obvious, varies according to the character of the conference and its procedure. It is sometimes composed of the president and the vice-presidents of the conference, the chairmen of the main committees, and possibly also of other committees, and, in exceptional cases, other members; or it may be an elected organ consisting of a definite number of members chosen from among each of the groups composing the conference. In the latter case, it may be found convenient, in order to avoid the delay necessarily entailed by the election of a committee at the very beginning of a session to agree, as a practical device, that the directing committee shall consist of the same number of members as the executive body of the permanent institution and that the several members of this body shall automatically compose the committee responsible for directing the work of the conference.

Number and Composition of Committees.

One of the first duties of the directing committee is to make proposals to the general assembly concerning the number of committees to be set up and their composition. In this connection, two different systems may be applied. In some international organisations the composition of each

committee faithfully reflects the composition of the plenary assembly itself, each delegation being entitled to appoint one member and a certain number of technical advisers for every committee. In other organisations the committees are composed of a limited number of members elected by the plenary assembly and representing, in certain given proportions, the groups composing the conference. In the latter case the directing committee of the conference takes the initiative of proposing to the plenary assembly the number of members to sit on each committee. Under this system when the number of committees and their membership have been fixed by the plenary assembly, the directing committee may apply the following procedure to the actual appointment of members :

1. The directing committee shall ask each group to furnish a list setting out in order of preference a larger number of names than there are places allotted to the group on the committee in question.

2. The committee shall then examine the lists furnished by the different groups and, if it appears desirable that any adjustment should be made in the composition of the committee so as to secure representation more adequate for the subject with which the committee will deal or more satisfactory as regards the allocation of seats to the various nationalities, it shall endeavour to secure such adjustment, subject to the approval of the representatives of the groups who are present.

3. If a delegate has not been included by his group in any of the lists of names to be submitted to the committee in accordance with paragraphs 1 and 2 with a view to being appointed a member of certain committees, he may make a request to the committee which shall have the power to place him on one or more committees, enlarging the number of members of this or these committees accordingly.

4. Any request under the preceding paragraph shall be made to the chairman of the directing committee at the latest at the sitting following that at which this committee has fixed the composition of the committee or committees in question.

Other Duties of the Directing Committee.

The initial stages of the setting into motion of an international conference are always a slow process. When at last all the committees are constituted and have begun to work the duties of the directing committee are by no means at an end. Throughout the session this committee will have to keep a close watch on the general progress of the work of the many organs of the conference and make sure that no part of the machinery is getting clogged. The breakdown or slackening of an apparently unimportant organ may well hold up the progress of the whole conference. All kinds of questions which are the business of no other committee are submitted to the directing committee, the sittings of which are usually held towards the late afternoon, when delegates after a long day's hard work are

apt to be irritable. These meetings afford an opportunity to all delegates to vent their grievances, and explain their difficulties, and generally, to use a colloquial expression, "to let off steam". The debates in this committee are often among the most enlightening and entertaining of the conference. Thus an apparently dry committee may sometimes witness debates pregnant with meaning.

A memorable and indeed most prophetic sitting of the Resolutions Committee of the International Labour Conference was that at which Albert Thomas, the Director of the International Labour Office, a short time before his death in 1932, made, in connection with an apparently trivial matter, one of the most stirring speeches of his career, in which he addressed an impassioned appeal to Governments urging them to settle their differences before it was too late.

Some time after the opening of the session, the directing committee will make a proposal concerning the date for the discussion of the report of the head of the permanent institution, and suggest that the plenary sittings on certain days be reserved for that discussion. This committee will probably also find it necessary at some stage to address a reminder to the various committees inviting them to hasten the adoption of their reports in order to allow delegates sufficient time to examine these reports before their consideration in plenary sittings.

The Drafting Committee.

Another duty which may fall to the directing committee is to propose the setting up of a *drafting committee*, consisting of a small number of persons, not necessarily delegates or advisers. The president, the secretary-general and one or more assistant secretary-generals and the legal advisers, are usually appointed to compose this committee. If, under the rules of procedure, each committee dealing with an item in regard to which formal texts are to be laid before the conference is required to set up a special drafting committee of its own, this committee will form part of the general drafting committee of the conference when the texts drawn up by the committee are submitted to the conference.

The Resolutions Committee.

Another committee, which is sometimes a permanent organ of an international conference, is the *resolutions committee*, charged with the examination of resolutions other than those relating to items on the agenda which are usually remitted to the committees specially set up for the consideration of these items. It is the business of the resolutions committee to examine the receivability of the resolutions, both as regard the time-limit laid down for their submission, if the rules of procedure

prescribe such a time-limit, and as regards the competence of the conference, and to consider also their expediency. After hearing the movers of the resolutions, the committee may make such amendments of substance or of form as it deems desirable in the resolutions which have been submitted to it. One of the special duties of the committee may be to distinguish, by appropriate drafting, resolutions which call for formal decisions by the conference involving exact legal consequences, from resolutions involving no legal obligations which are destined either for the executive body of the permanent institution or Governments or any other body. In due course this committee submits a report to the conference. A special provision of the rules may foresee that any resolution implying expenditure shall, in the first instance, be referred by this committee to the executive body of the institution for consideration.

The Committee on Standing Orders.

Finally, a *committee on Standing Orders*, to which all matters relating to the procedure of the conference are remitted, is also as a rule a regular feature of most international conferences.

Other Committees.

Apart from the above-mentioned committees, which may be regarded as permanent organic bodies

of international conferences, a certain number of other committees are set up at each session for dealing with the questions on the agenda of the session.

Different systems may be adopted for the allocation of the various subjects among the committees. One of them consists in constituting a fixed number of committees, say six or seven, on which each delegation is represented, and among which the various items on the agenda are distributed for consideration and report to the plenary meeting. The directing committee takes the initiative of proposing to the general assembly the constitution of the committees and the list of questions to be submitted to each of them. This system is specially suited to the work of the general assembly of a large international institution which deals with a great variety of questions. ¹

¹ At the Nineteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the League of Nations (1938), the following committees were set up :

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| First committee : | Legal questions ; |
| Second » : | Economic, financial and transit ques-
tions ; |
| Third » : | Limitation and reduction of arma-
ments ; |
| Fourth » : | Budgetary and administrative ques-
tions ; |
| Fifth » : | Social questions ; |
| Sixth » : | Political questions ; |
| Seventh » : | Various technical questions (health,
opium, intellectual co-operation,
etc.). |

Another system, which is better adapted to the needs of conferences dealing with a definite number of items all different in character, is the setting up of a special committee for the consideration of each of the items. As explained above, the number and membership of these committees are fixed by the plenary assembly on the proposal of the directing committee. The size of each committee will naturally depend on the nature of the question which it will have to examine. Matters highly technical in character are referred to small committees composed of a limited number of experts, while questions more general in scope are thrashed out in large committees on which almost all the delegations are represented.

The Initial Stages of a Conference.

A certain time is always required for an international conference to gather sufficient momentum to be able to start on its course at the desirable speed. The unavoidable game of battledore and shuttlecock between the plenary assembly and the directing committee, in their endeavour to meet the many and often irreconcilable claims of members who wish to sit on a particular committee, while seeking to avoid setting up too many committees of unmanageable size, generally absorbs three or four days at the beginning of each session.

It is only after these preliminary arrangements have been made that the conference is in a position to proceed with the discussion of its agenda. The committees usually get down to work immediately after their constitution, but it may happen that a general discussion takes place in plenary sitting before a particular subject is referred to the competent committee.

The Report of the Head of the Administration.

After these preliminary stages an apparent lull sets in, during which no more plenary sittings are held for some time, so as to enable the committees to get on with their work. Some time later, perhaps after a week's interval, plenary sittings are resumed for the discussion of the report prepared by the head of the permanent institution on the work of the organisation since the last general assembly. This discussion affords an opportunity to all delegates of making known the achievements of their countries in the particular fields which are the concern of the international organisation in question and of urging the tackling of problems which they consider of special importance. The sitting at which the head of the institution replies to the discussion on his report, particularly if he is well known as an orator, often marks the culminating point in the interest of the session.

The Committees at Work.

Let us now suppose that the committees are all constituted and ready to hold their first sitting. A very noticeable change has taken place in the lobby and corridors of the conference building. The bustling crowd and the busy hum of many voices in different tongues which animated them during the previous days have now disappeared as by the touch of a magic wand. Delegates, substitutes, advisers and secretaries, who were beginning to be restless at the duration of the preparatory arrangements, seem to have been lured away as by a mysterious Pied Piper into the many haunts of the building where the committees are meeting. At last the enthusiastic neophyte is being given an outlet for his pent-up feelings and an opportunity of showing the stuff he is made of and of delivering those well-balanced sentences which perhaps he has been rehearsing during a sleepless night in a train to the accompaniment of the rattling noise of the wheels. Imagination is a licensed trespasser, we are told, so why not enter one of the committee rooms and see for ourselves how they work.

The Officers of the Committee.

In many respects a committee is a conference in miniature whether it be composed of delegates from all the countries represented or be an elected body

consisting of a limited number of members from each of the groups composing the conference. Committees are run very much on the same lines as the conference itself, with, however, the important difference that their proceedings are less formal and more businesslike.

The first meeting of a committee is usually opened by an official of the secretariat appointed for the purpose by the secretary-general. This official conducts the business until a chairman, chosen from the members, has been elected. However, at a maritime conference held in the early 'twenties, a committee composed of brisk shipowners and seamen, little embarrassed by the niceties of rules of procedure, chose as its chairman the secretary of the committee, who happened to be a distinguished expert on international law, and who later became a professor at Harvard University. But such unorthodox behaviour would hardly have been conceivable later on when international conferences had been established on a firmer footing.

On the invitation of the official of the secretariat, the committee appoints a chairman and one or more vice-chairmen. If the committee is composed of several autonomous groups, it is a recognised practice that the chairman and the vice-chairmen are chosen from each of these groups. At the first or one of the early sittings the committee also

appoints one or more reporters, whose duty it is to draw up the report of the committee with the assistance of the secretaries. This report is submitted to the committee for its approval before being transmitted to the plenary conference.

The duties of the chairman of a committee are very similar to those of the president of the plenary assembly. He declares the opening and close of the sittings and, after consulting the vice-chairmen or the committee itself, fixes the date and time of the sittings. Before proceeding with the agenda, he brings before the committee any communication which may concern it. He directs the debates, maintains order, ensures the observance of the Standing Orders, grants or withdraws the right to address the committee in accordance with the provisions of the rules, puts questions to the vote and announces the result of the vote. It may be provided in the rules that he shall have the right to take part in the discussions and to vote, except when replaced on the committee by a substitute; he shall not, however, have a casting vote. The vice-chairmen preside alternatively over the sittings or part of the sittings at which the chairman cannot be present.

The Secretariat of Committees.

The committee is usually assisted by a representative of the secretary-general of the conference,

or maybe by the secretary-general himself, when a special difficulty arises which requires his guidance, as well as by a secretariat, composed as a rule of a secretary for each of the principal languages, and a clerk in charge of documents.

The representative of the secretary-general may be called upon to explain and justify the proposals formulated by the permanent institution in its preparatory reports, furnish such information as may be required in regard to the past or future work of the institution, and see that the action taken or suggested by the committee is in accordance with the constitution and rules of procedure of the organisation.

The secretaries of a large committee have many and exacting tasks to perform. Circumstances have arisen when, at a conference itself urging the adoption of an 8-hour day, the secretaries worked many days continuously for nearly the round of the clock. Before the opening of the meeting the secretaries will of course make it their business to be conversant with all the relevant documents: the constitution of the organisation and its rules of procedure, the preparatory reports on the questions to be considered by the committee, the list of delegates, as well as general or special instructions concerning their work, the lists of offices and telephone numbers, etc. They will also see that the necessary files are prepared by the competent

service, generally the registry, for the classification in the different languages of the minutes, report, and other papers relevant to the work of the committee.

At the opening of the first sitting the secretaries will check the list of members of the committee and, if such is the practice of the conference, transmit as soon as possible, in one or more copies, a complete list, including the names of the Officers and secretaries of the committee, to the service responsible for the printing of the Provisional Record. At the close of each sitting the secretaries should immediately send a note to the official who prepares the daily bulletin or journal, informing him of the time of the next meeting, so that this information may be published in the next issue of the bulletin or journal. This information may also be conveyed by telephone, in which case, it should always be confirmed in writing in order to avoid any misunderstanding.

The Minutes of Committees.

The main duty of the secretaries is the drafting of the minutes of the sittings of the committee. As a rule, no verbatim record is made of debates in committees. The minutes are intended to be only a summarised record of the proceedings, their primary object being to record the decisions of the committee. When prepared, the minutes are

circulated to members, who should be requested to communicate their corrections, if any, within a given time — say, 24 hours — to the secretariat of the committee. After they have been approved by the committee either tacitly or expressly, and signed by the chairman, the minutes, in which any corrections suggested by members have been inserted, are published or simply kept in roneographed form in the archives of the permanent institution.

Since the minutes of committees have to be dictated first in draft form, then typed on stencils and roneographed in a considerable number of copies and in several languages, they should be written in as concise a form as possible. All unnecessary conventional formulae should be omitted, and underlined words, paragraphs, footnotes, etc. reduced to a minimum. Debates on questions of procedure which do not affect the substance of the issues under consideration, should especially be summarised in a succinct manner. It will often suffice to state that: "After an exchange of views on such and such a point of procedure, the committee decided . . ." The minutes should afford a true and precise record of the work of the committee, but it is unnecessary to reproduce *in extenso* quotations from the reports before the committee and in most cases it will be sufficient to refer to the page. Amendments submitted to the committee should, however, be

given in full. As regards further details concerning the preparation of minutes, general instructions should be circulated to all the secretaries calling their attention to any other particulars, such as the form to be given to the minutes, the recording of the votes, the practical arrangements for the dictation of the minutes, the roneographing and distributing of the minutes and other documents, etc. It may even be advisable to include in these instructions models to be followed by all the secretaries in order to ensure the desirable uniformity in the preparation of the minutes. All the documents distributed to a committee (draft resolutions, amendments, draft reports, etc.), should preferably be numbered in a single series, and a record of these documents, with their reference number and dates of reception and distribution, be kept by one of the secretaries.

The secretariat of the committee is completed by a team of interpreters, if possible one interpreter for each of the main languages in use. Debates in committees are frequently highly technical in character and the interpreters must often be something of experts themselves. A slip which, in fact, might lead to serious misunderstandings very rarely passes unnoticed, since there are always zealous members in the committee who understand the different languages and make it their duty to check the oral translations.

The Working of Committees.

The work in the committee usually begins with a general discussion on the principles underlying the proposals submitted to it. This general discussion affords an opportunity of prospecting the whole field under consideration and making positions clear in regard to the problems at issue. Already at this early stage it is generally possible to discern the tactics that are going to be adopted by the chief protagonists. The strategy applied in a committee naturally varies according to the character of its membership and the nature of the questions under discussion. A committee composed of professional diplomats offers a very different atmosphere from that of a committee consisting of blunt mineowners and miners. Similarly, the method of approach in a discussion on a question such as the international standardisation of certain medicines will naturally be very different from that applied in the treatment of a problem involving a violent clash between political or industrial interests such as the reduction of armaments or the adoption of the forty hours week.

Sometimes the general discussion reaches at the very beginning a high pitch by an exchange of direct language between the chief opponents, who, like Homer's heroes, harangue one another before proceeding to battle. In other cases the struggle assumes at the outset more insidious forms, but is

none the less tense. Skilful sounding is carried out in order to ascertain the weak point in the opponent's line of defence. The experts, who had been somewhat at a discount during the early part of the conference when plenary sittings were being held, now enjoy a boom and at last can display their thorough mastery of the questions before the committee.

The general discussion serves a twofold purpose : technical and psychological. Technically, it permits of a comprehensive survey of all the aspects of the question at issue and a pooling of experiences and opinions in regard to the solutions recommended. Psychologically, it serves an equally useful purpose by enabling all members to clear their consciences, and their throats, and producing in the committee that healthy desire to get down to brass tacks, which generally makes itself felt after a number of sittings have been devoted to a general discussion. When the chairman considers that the time has come to proceed to the discussion of definite texts, he declares the general discussion closed and invites the committee to consider the concrete proposals before it. These proposals usually take the form either of resolutions, or of conclusions, or of draft international conventions. It is generally at this stage that amendments begin to flow in and often it is no easy task for the secretaries to keep abreast of this surging tide. These amendments,

the number of which may run up to more than one hundred in a short time and which very often are purposed to play the part of the horse of Troy in the opponents' camp, have to be put into form, translated and circulated at short notice. Most of them are doomed to be short lived, but their authors have nevertheless the satisfaction of having submitted a definite proposal and will thus be able to give a good account of themselves to those whom they represent.

The Committee's Report.

When all the amendments have been disposed of and the texts of the proposals before the committee considered paragraph by paragraph, if not word by word, the reporter, who has already probably been collecting the materials for his report, starts drawing it up. This report is sometimes prepared on the following lines: first of all, information is given on the constitution and composition of the committee and its officers (date on which it was set up, number of its members, names of its officers, number of sittings it held and sub-committees it set up); then a summary may be given of the general discussion, if such a discussion took place, stressing the principal arguments put forward by the leading spokesmen of the various interests represented on the committee.

This will be followed by a summary of the discussion on each of the articles or paragraphs of the texts before the committee. At the end of the report, or as an appendix to it, may be given the proposed texts, resolutions, conclusions or draft international conventions, as the case may be, which are submitted to the plenary meeting for approval. The adoption by the committee of its report usually concludes its labours, though it may happen that a particular proposal is referred back to the committee by the general assembly for further consideration. A vote of thanks to the chairman and reporter and other officers of the committee marks the end of its session.

The real work of most conferences is done in the committees, and the debates in these bodies, whose members are not subjected to the same restraints as in the more formal plenary sittings, are often most entertaining. All who attended the early meetings of the Fourth Committee of the Assembly of the League of Nations when the budget of the International Labour Office was being discussed will retain in their memories a vivid picture of Albert Thomas, the first Director of the Office, defending his budget against the assaults of his many opponents. Like a modern Laocoon, he struggled relentlessly, but, unlike his mythological prototype, he prevailed over the forces that endeavoured to smother him.

Plenary Sitzings Resumed.

While the committees were busy at work, the assembly hall was deserted. Here and there a delegate, in search of a quiet oasis, may have taken refuge in the hall and may be seen at his desk in deep concentration, preparing a speech or writing a letter. After an interval of a few days, during which the committees were allowed to get on with their labours, plenary sittings are held again, first of all to discuss the report of the head of the permanent institution on the results achieved since the last session to which reference has already been made. This discussion generally takes a few days and is wound up by a speech delivered by the head of the institution in which he reviews the various opinions, criticisms and suggestions formulated by the many speakers, and indicates the lines along which the work of the institution might be developed in the future.

Gradually reports of committees are issued and ready for discussion in the full assembly. Plenary sittings then follow in close succession and henceforward there will be little respite until the close of the session. It is usually prescribed in the rules of procedure that the report of a committee must be circulated twenty-four hours before it is brought up in plenary sitting. In some international organisations the discussion and adoption of the

reports of committees in plenary sitting are a mere formality, especially when all the delegations have been represented on the committees and the reports have been adopted unanimously by these bodies. In such organisations the rules may even expressly provide that, when a committee has unanimously declared that it does not consider the discussion of its report in plenary session to be necessary and when no delegate has subsequently asked the president to open a discussion on the report, the president shall read the title of the report and put forthwith to the vote the resolutions which are proposed. In other organisations, where the questions under consideration are generally highly controversial in character and where the committees set up are elected bodies in which a limited number of delegations are represented, the discussion of the report of a committee in plenary sitting assumes much greater importance.

The debates in plenary sitting are usually opened by the president and the reporter or reporters of the committee who are generally asked to come up to the platform to submit the report. The general discussion with which the consideration of the report usually begins affords an opportunity to certain delegates of stating their position in regard to the proposals before the full meeting, and to others of bringing up proposals which they have failed to get accepted by the committee. Defeated but unre-

signed minorities still cherish the hope of finding new allies among the delegates who have not taken part in the work of the committee and whose instructions perhaps are sufficiently vague to enable them to vote indifferently for or against a certain proposal. Active canvassing has probably been going on behind the scenes during the previous days which now, it is hoped, will bear fruit. In a conference composed of delegates representing at the same time countries and industrial interests it is indeed fascinating to watch delegations, according to the nature of the issues, cleave sometimes on lines of political affinities and sometimes strictly on the basis of common industrial or other interests.

When the general discussion is concluded, the resolutions, conclusions or draft conventions contained in the report are submitted to the plenary sitting for approval, paragraph by paragraph. Amendments to the texts may still be proposed at this late stage, and, if adopted by the plenary sitting, inserted in the texts. Then the proposals as a whole are voted on and, if approved, may be referred to the drafting committee for the preparation of final texts.

Final Record Votes.

The constitution or rules of procedure of the international organisation concerned may provide that a qualified majority — for example, a two-

thirds' majority — is necessary for certain decisions of outstanding importance or for the adoption of formal texts of draft international conventions, and that a record vote shall be taken in such cases. The greater part of the final sittings is often occupied by the many record votes which have thus to be taken. The Clerk of the conference reads in a loud voice the names of the delegates, who reply "Yes" or "No", or the corresponding words in their own language. Absolute silence is, or should be, observed by all those present, perhaps occasionally interrupted by the inevitable laughter caused by the well-known die-hard conservative who, by mistake, votes for a proposal involving a drastic social reform, or by the delegate who utters his reply with a roar in order the better to express his approval or indignation. Guttural northern names, familiar Anglo-Saxon names, rythmical French names, long hyphenated Spanish names, Far-Eastern names with their cascade of diphthongs, ring through the hall as if the ritual of some mysterious cult were being performed. When the last name has been called out a tense lull ensues, during which the clerk and his assistants are busy counting up the votes. A latecomer, maybe hastily coached by his fellow-delegates, hurries up to the platform to have his vote recorded. The result of the voting is then proclaimed by the president, and, if in accordance with the wishes

of the majority of the voters, elicits a burst of applause.

The Closing Sitting.

When all the reports of the committees and other matters on the agenda have been disposed of, the closing sitting is held. After many weeks of hard work, and perhaps also hard fighting, there is a general feeling of relaxation. The president delivers his closing address, in which he reviews the achievements of the session and draws lessons for the future. He who has listened with enduring patience for so many long hours to so many speeches can now at last have his say. He may humorously refer to the many points of order raised during the discussions, often perhaps more pointed than to the point, gently chide delegates who have overtaxed his leniency, and paternally give all-round advice. A real feeling of gratitude pervades the audience towards their president. The chief spokesmen of the conference come up in turn to the rostrum to convey an expression of gratitude to him on behalf of those whom they represent. They extol his skilful guidance of affairs, his patience, his tact, his perfect objectivity, though maybe this praise is not always deserved. It is also a suitable opportunity for addressing thanks to the secretary-general, perhaps referring to his perfect arrange-

ments owing to which the conference was kept throughout the session in smooth working order, and for expressing words of appreciation of the staff whose unstinted efforts under perhaps very strenuous circumstances have contributed so much to the success of the conference.

When the conference has been convened in a certain country on the invitation of the Government of that country, the closing speeches afford an appropriate opportunity of expressing warm thanks to the authorities and the people of the country for their generous hospitality. It is customary for the head of the permanent institution subsequently to confirm this expression of gratitude by letters addressed to the Ministers and other authorities who were mainly responsible for welcoming the conference.

The business of the conference is now concluded and there only remains for the president to wish all delegates Godspeed to their homes and to declare the session of the conference closed. Delegates hurriedly quit their seats, many of them come up on to the platform to shake hands with the president, the secretary-general and other officials, and the assembly hall empties swiftly. The lobby once more is filled with an excited crowd : like on breaking-up day at school, an exhilarated feeling of joy and relief, mingled with an undertone of

regret at separating from so many friends and colleagues, prevails. Addresses and visiting-cards are exchanged in haste ; delegates from southern countries exuberantly clap one another on the back, tall healthy-looking Englishmen laugh heartily, while sturdy descendants of the Vikings exchange handshakes vigorously. Wives or daughters of delegates who perhaps have devoted the greater part of the session to sightseeing and shopping, have not failed to attend the closing session, and their bright clothes and clear voices leaven the somewhat stolid crowd of gentlemen. Trains have to be caught and farewells must be cut short. Little by little the lobby itself is deserted, and soon the conference building is nothing more than an empty shell. The work of the staff is not, however, yet quite completed. They must sort and pack their papers ; reports on matters disposed of which a short time before seemed to embody the law of the twelve tables, now lie about as *res derelictae*, having suddenly been robbed of their importance like textbooks after an examination. If the conference was held in a building specially placed at its disposal by a Government or any other public authority, the efficient work of the local staff of messengers, cleaners, etc. must be shown due recognition in an appropriate manner.

CHAPTER V

THE RULES OF PROCEDURE OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

An international conference without rules of procedure is very much like a ship without a chart of the seas she must sail. Like the ship, at any moment the conference may run on to a sandbank and remain stuck there for some time. Even when clear and definite rules of procedure have been laid down, it is no easy task to steer a conference through the many dangers besetting its course into the safe harbour which is its goal.

Special Questions of Procedure.

In the preceding chapters consideration has already been given to several important points of procedure, such as the verification of credentials, the election of the officers of the conference, the composition of the secretariat, the adoption of a procedure of single or double discussion, the working of committees, the duties of the president and

officers of the conference, the drawing up of the agenda, etc. It is now proposed to deal more particularly with certain special questions of procedure which arise in practically all international conferences and often cause serious difficulties. As has already been pointed out, the problem of reconciling the divergent systems of parliamentary procedure applied in different countries or groups of countries is by no means easy to solve, but it nevertheless has to be faced at the very outset of its session by every international conference. It is obviously impossible to adopt provisions that satisfy everybody and therefore any rules agreed on must be regarded in a sense as a compromise between the various possible systems.

When the conference is the regular session of a permanent international institution, rules presumably already exist and need only be applied, but if the conference is called by a Government or group of Governments for a special purpose, or is the first session of a newly created institution, those responsible for carrying out the preparatory work will do well to draw up in advance rules of procedure which may be submitted to the conference soon after it meets. Very unpleasant incidents, which may leave bitterness and resentment for assumed unfair dealing, sometimes occur in connection with questions of procedure. For example, the order in which amendments are put to the vote may deter-

mine the adoption or loss of a particular proposal to which great importance is attached by a delegation or section of the conference.

The powers conferred upon the general conference of a permanent international institution are as a rule clearly defined in its constitution or in the international treaty in virtue of which it was founded. The object of the rules of procedure is to lay down definite provisions regarding the working of the conference, and settle points of detail which could hardly have been provided for in the original constitution or treaty. It may, of course, be necessary to reproduce certain provisions of these fundamental instruments in the rules of procedure in order to render them easily intelligible. The main points to be covered by the rules of procedure of the general conference of a permanent international institution are dealt with below. It should however be noted that many of these rules may also be applied *mutatis mutandis* in the case of conferences summoned for a special purpose, by a group of Governments.

Periodicity of Sessions.

In regard to the periodicity of sessions, two systems are conceivable. On the one hand, the rules may provide that the general session shall be held from time to time as occasion may require, and

at least once within a given period of time, generally a year, and in that case the decision to convene a session is generally taken by the executive authority of the permanent institution, or it may be foreseen that the general session shall meet automatically at regular intervals. Under both systems the actual day of the month on which the session opens is usually fixed by the competent authority of the permanent institution for each particular session, or the rules may prescribe that the general session shall open regularly every year on a certain day (for example, the second Monday) of a given month.

The usual practice is to hold one session every year but this is no absolute rule, and according to the urgency or special character of the questions to be considered it may be found desirable to hold sessions at shorter intervals. Under the system according to which the general session opens every year on a fixed date, the rules may provide for the holding of extraordinary sessions, such sessions being summoned in pursuance of a decision taken either by a previous general session or by the executive body of the institution. An extraordinary session may also be held on the initiative of one of the Members of the institution. In that event the other Members are consulted, and if a majority of them concur in the request, a special session is summoned.

Place of Meeting.

The general session of an international institution is usually held at the seat of the institution. However, in exceptional circumstances it may meet in such place as may be decided either by a previous general assembly (and for such a decision a qualified majority may be required), or by a decision of the executive body of the institution, or by a majority of the Members of the institution.

Convocation and Agenda.

The general sessions are usually summoned by the executive body of the institution or its chairman, acting through the permanent head of the institution. The agenda of the session must as a rule be sent out so as to reach Members a sufficient time before the opening of the session, generally four months. The fulfilment of this condition is sometimes an absolute rule laid down in the constitution and suffering no exception, or a less rigid system may be applied whereby, in exceptional circumstances, a shorter period for the transmission of the agenda may be sanctioned by the executive body of the institution. The rules of procedure generally contain detailed provisions concerning the method to be applied for the placing of items on the agenda of the general session and the inclusion of additional items.

The Composition of the General Session.

The rules fixing the composition of the general session usually reproduce the relevant provisions of the constitution. A great variety of systems exists for the representation of affiliated Members in international conferences. One of them consists in providing that the general assembly shall be composed of all the delegates duly appointed by the Members of the institution in accordance with the constitution, and that they may be accompanied by advisers, the number of whom shall not exceed a given figure for each item on the agenda. Another system is that whereby each Member may appoint representatives, of whom the number shall not exceed a certain figure, say three, as well as substitute representatives. In addition, the representatives of a Member acting together as a delegation may be allowed to appoint substitutes. Further provisions determine the circumstances in which a substitute representative or a substitute may replace a representative who is absent or prevented from attending a sitting.

Right of Admission to Sitzings.

The plenary sittings are usually public, except in cases where the contrary has been expressly decided. The decisions taken at a private sitting upon items on the agenda are generally announced at a subsequent public sitting.

Detailed rules may also be laid down concerning the persons who, apart from delegates, advisers and substitutes, are permitted to enter the body of the hall where the general session is held. These persons may be the following :

(a) Ministers whose departments deal with the questions discussed at the general session or by the conference and who are not delegates or advisers ;

(b) one secretary or interpreter for each delegation ;

(c) representatives on the executive body who are not delegates or advisers ;

(d) the head of the permanent international institution and the officials of the secretariat ;

(e) the secretaries of certain groups of the conference, if such groups exist ;

(f) persons appointed by Members of the institution to occupy advisers' or substitutes' posts which may fall vacant in their delegations, and

(g) persons appointed as observers by a State invited to attend the session.

Credentials of Delegates.

Provisions governing the deposit and verification of the credentials of delegates, which have already been dealt with in some detail in the preceding chapter, are practically always included in the rules of procedure.

Officers.

The rules may provide that the general session shall be opened by the chairman of the executive body of the permanent institution, assisted by the other officers of that body, and that they shall continue to act until the president has assumed his office. These rules usually define the procedure to be followed for the election of the president and the other officers of the conference, and especially fix their number.

Committees.

The rules of procedure generally contain detailed provisions concerning the setting up of various committees by the session, the composition of these committees and their duties. Among other committees, the following may be constituted: a general or selection committee, which is responsible for directing the work of the conference, fixing the date and agenda of the plenary sittings and determining the order of priority for the various items; a credentials committee, whose task it is to verify the credentials of delegates; an agenda committee, which considers applications for the inclusion of new questions in the agenda of the session, when such a procedure is permitted by the constitution or the rules; a nomination committee, whose duty it is to nominate candidates for certain impor-

tant functions which may carry with them a seat on the general committee ; a resolutions committee, set up for the consideration of resolutions other than those relating to items on the agenda ; a drafting committee, and, finally, such other committees as are required for the consideration of the special items on the agenda of the session.

The composition and duties of these various committees are usually determined in the general rules. The procedure to be applied in committees may be governed either by the general rules of the conference, with such adjustments as may appear necessary, or by a separate body of rules specially adapted to the needs of committees. These rules may deal with the following points : officers of committees, duties of the chairman, sub-committees and drafting committees, substitutes, secretariat, languages, right to address the committee, resolutions, amendments and motions, closure of discussions, right to partake in the work of committees, voting, quorum, minutes, etc.

Procedure for Discussions.

The following rules may be applied in this matter :

1. No delegate may address the plenary session unless he has asked and obtained permission of the president.

2. Speakers shall be called upon in the order in which they have signified their desire to speak. The chairman and the reporter of a committee may be accorded precedence for the purpose of defending or explaining the conclusions arrived at by the committee.

3. No delegate shall speak more than once upon the same motion, resolution or amendment, without special permission of the meeting, provided that the mover of a motion, resolution or amendment shall have the right to speak twice, unless the closure has been adopted in accordance with the relevant provisions of the rules.

4. The president may call a speaker to order if his remarks are not relevant to the subject under discussion. If necessary he may direct the speaker to resume his seat.

5. A delegate may at any time rise to a point of order and such point of order shall be decided forthwith by the president in accordance with the rules of procedure.

6. Except with the special consent of the meeting, no speech shall exceed fifteen minutes, exclusive of the time for translation.

7. Ministers whose departments deal with the questions discussed by the meeting, and who are not delegates or advisers, members of the executive

body of the permanent institution, and the head of the institution or his representative, may address the plenary session if invited to do so by the president.

8. Persons appointed as observers by a State invited to attend the meeting may, with the permission of the president, address the conference during the general discussions.

Languages.

As regards languages, the following rules may be adopted :

1. The official languages of the meeting shall be . . . (here mention official languages) ;

2. Speeches delivered in one of these languages shall be summarised in the official languages by an interpreter belonging to the secretariat of the conference ;

3. A delegate may speak in a non-official language, but must provide for a summarised translation of his speech into one of the official languages by an interpreter attached to his delegation, unless an interpreter of the secretariat for the official languages can be placed at his disposal. This summarised translation shall then be rendered in the other official languages.

4. All documents, resolutions and reports circulated by the president or the secretariat shall be

rendered in the official languages. Special arrangements may be made for the distribution of documents in other languages.

Motions, Resolutions and Amendments.

This matter may be governed by the following provisions :

1. Any delegate may move motions, resolutions or amendments in accordance with the established rules.

2. All resolutions must be submitted in writing in one of the official languages and handed in to the secretariat within a certain time-limit (to be fixed in the rules).

3. The texts of resolutions and amendments shall be translated into the other official languages and distributed to delegates within a certain time-limit (for example, not later than the day following that on which they were received).

4. Amendments to resolutions or to amendments already submitted under the conditions referred to above may be moved without previous notice, provided that the text of any amendment shall be handed in to the secretariat before such amendment is moved.

5. If there are several amendments to a resolution or motion, the president shall determine the

order in which they shall be discussed and put to the vote, subject to the following provisions :

(a) Every motion, resolution and amendment shall be put to the vote ;

(b) Amendments may be voted on either individually or against other amendments, according as the president may decide, but before a motion or resolution itself is deemed to be amended it shall be directly tested by vote against the amendment amending it ;

(c) If a motion or resolution is amended as the result of a vote, that motion or resolution shall be put to the meeting for a final vote.

6. Any amendment may be withdrawn by the person who moved it unless an amendment to it is under discussion or has been adopted. Any amendment so withdrawn may be moved without previous notice by any other person entitled to take part in the discussions.

7. No resolution, amendment or motion shall be discussed unless it has been seconded.

8. No previous notice need be given, nor need a copy be handed in to the secretariat in the case of motions such as : a motion to refer the matter back ; a motion to postpone consideration of the question ; a motion to adjourn the sitting ; a motion to adjourn a debate on a particular question ; a motion that the meeting proceed to the next item on the agenda.

9. Any member may at any time draw attention to the fact that the rules of procedure are not being observed, and the president shall give an immediate ruling upon any question so raised.

Closure.

The closure of the discussion may be decided in accordance with the following rules :

1. Any delegate may move the closure of the discussion either on a particular resolution or amendment, or on a general question ;

2. The president shall put a motion for the closure of the discussion if it is supported by at least a certain number of the delegates (this number will depend upon the total number of the delegates attending the session). Before putting it to the vote, however, he shall read out the names of those persons who had already signified their wish to speak before the closure had been moved ;

3. If application is made for permission to speak against the closure it shall be accorded, subject to the condition that no speaker shall be allowed to speak for more than a given time, say, five minutes.

4. Subject to the foregoing provisions, no one shall be allowed to speak on a question after the closure has been voted.

Voting.

Methods of voting vary according to the character of the conference and the nature of the issues which are being discussed. The usual method of voting is by a show of hands. The president invites delegates who are in favour of the motion to raise their hands. The votes thus cast are counted by the officials of the secretariat. The same procedure is repeated for ascertaining the number of votes against a motion. The final result is then announced by the president. A protest was once raised by an over-scrupulous delegate in the case of another who happened to represent two countries and raised both his hands in favour of a proposal, but, in fact, the voter was quite justified in so doing. Voting may also take place by the heads of delegations rising in their seats to signify their assent or dissent in regard to a proposal.

A more formal method of voting which is applied as a general rule in respect of all matters other than questions of procedure in certain international conferences while in other international meetings it is put into practice only in regard to important issues is the taking of a record vote. In accordance with this method, the name of each delegation or of each individual delegate, if under the rules in force delegates vote individually, is called ; a member of the delegation or the individual delegate as the

case may be, replies " Yes ", " No " or " Abstain ". The result of the vote is recorded by the officials of the secretariat and announced by the president.

A third method of voting which is generally applied for decisions relating to individuals and elections of members to certain bodies, such as the executive body of the institution, is by secret ballot.

Although the rules to be applied in this matter will necessarily depend upon the character and the powers of the conference, the following rules may be applied :

1. The conference shall vote by a show of hands or by a record vote (the rules shall determine which of the two methods is the normal method of voting. The present rules are based on the assumption that voting by a show of hands is the normal method and record voting the exceptional) ;

2. Voting shall be by a show of hands, except as hereinafter provided ;

3. Votes by a show of hands shall be counted by the secretariat and the result announced by the president ;

4. In case of doubt as to the result, the president may cause a record vote to be taken ;

5. A record vote shall be taken in all cases in which a qualified majority of the votes is required

by the constitution or if a request to that effect has been made in writing, by not fewer than . . . delegates (this number will depend upon the membership), and handed in to the president ;

6. Record votes shall be taken by calling each individual delegate, who shall reply "Yes", "No" or "Abstain". (Alternative text: Record votes shall be taken by calling the name of each delegation, a member of which shall reply "Yes", "No" or "Abstain".) The votes shall be recorded by the secretariat and announced by the president.

Majorities.

The constitution or the rules of procedure of the institution may prescribe that decisions shall be taken either by a unanimous vote, or by a qualified majority, or by a simple majority. While in some international assemblies a unanimous decision is required in regard to all matters other than those relating to procedure, in others a simple majority is the general rule, a qualified majority being necessary only when such a majority is specially required by the constitution. The detailed rules to be adopted in this matter will therefore vary according to the system obtaining. If the unanimity rule is applied, the following provisions may be observed :

1. Except where otherwise expressly provided in the constitution, decisions shall be taken by a unanimous vote of the Members represented at the meeting.

2. All matters of procedure shall be decided by a majority of the Members represented at the meeting.

3. All decisions taken in virtue of the rules of procedure shall be considered as matters of procedure.

If, on the other hand, a simple majority and a qualified majority are foreseen according to the nature of the issues, the following rule may meet the case.

In order to be adopted by a simple or a qualified majority, it is necessary that the proposals submitted to the vote obtain, as the case may be, more than half, or a fixed proportion, of the votes cast. Abstentions shall not be taken into account in determining the number of votes cast.

Quorum

The rules of procedure applied in most international conferences usually provide that a vote is not valid unless the total number of votes

cast is equal to a certain proportion (perhaps a half) of the number of delegates attending the conference. Rules ensuring the fulfilment of this condition may be drafted on the following lines :

1. A vote shall not be valid if the number of votes cast for and against is less than . . . (say a half) the number of delegates attending the conference and having the right to vote. This number shall be fixed by the credentials committee. Any delegate who finally leaves the conference before its closing and who gives formal notice of his departure to the secretariat without authorising a substitute to act in his place, shall be regarded as no longer attending the conference. If any delegate is not finally admitted, the number constituting the quorum shall be modified accordingly for the subsequent sittings.

2. Where a quorum has not been obtained in a vote by a show of hands, the president may immediately take a record vote. He shall be under the obligation to do so if a record vote is called for by a certain proportion (to be fixed in the rules) of the Members present.

3. Where a quorum has not been obtained in a vote by a show of hands only or in a record vote, the president may take a record vote on the same question at one of the two next sittings.

Adjusting Rules to Practical Needs.

The above are some of the more important points which are usually determined in the rules of procedure of any international conference but it is obvious that, apart from these questions, each particular conference has its own special difficulties to solve, and the solutions which are evolved in the light of experience are embodied in appropriate provisions forming a body of rules which are completed and improved in the course of time. In drawing up rules for any new international organisation, account must be taken both of the provisions of the fundamental agreement under which it was founded and the practical needs of its effective working.

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CHAPTER VI

THE SOCIAL SIDE OF INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

Towards the close of this study it seems desirable briefly to refer to the social side of international conferences, since a book dealing with the organisation of such conferences would hardly be complete if it did not include a chapter on this subject.

First of all, the remark may be permitted that the social side of international conferences is easily apt to be overdone and only too often delegates at such conferences may be heard remarking that their state of exhaustion towards the close of the session is to be attributed rather to the number of social functions they had to attend than to the actual work they accomplished. Uninformed outsiders are sometimes inclined to cast at international conferences the gibe that they are a mere pretext for indulging in touring and feasting at the

cost of the tax-payer. In days gone by the Vienna Congress earned for itself a well-established reputation as a dancing congress but nevertheless it performed the task set to it slightly more efficiently than some of its more recent successors.

It is also sometimes said that among the many evils that war brings in its train, one of them is the multiplication of international conferences and, indeed, the number held between the years 1920 and 1930 was undoubtedly excessive if their value is to be measured by the results achieved. But human nature being what it is, after any long period of warfare during which nations and peoples have had to strain every nerve for the one single purpose of defence and live segregated in hostile camps, a natural impulse urges them on the conclusion of peace to resume organised relationships and make a fresh attempt at establishing the world-community on the solid foundation of peace.

Minor incidents occurring in connection with the social side of conferences may sometimes have far-reaching consequences. For instance, at the Cannes Conference in 1922, one of the many meetings held after the last war for the purpose of settling the reparations question, great capital was made by Briand's opponents out of a photograph showing him on the golf links being initiated by Mr. Lloyd George to this noble game, while France's major interests were assumed to be in jeopardy.

The first really international conferences held after a war are generally marked by tense situations. When delegations from former enemy countries suddenly face one another, there is at first a feeling of embarrassment which, however, as a rule, is quickly overcome and replaced by a genuine desire to let bygones be bygones and tackle the practical work to be accomplished. Prominent personalities always attract great attention. At the Genoa Conference in 1922, whenever Mr. Tchitcherine, the Russian Commissioner for Foreign Affairs, appeared at any of the many and splendid receptions offered in the beautiful Palazzos of that town, he was immediately surrounded by such a dense crowd that he could move only with difficulty and when he did succeed in doing so, a throng of curious guests followed his every movement like a swarm of bees.

If it be a mistake to overdo the social side of international conferences, the importance of this aspect of such gatherings should however not be underestimated. The social functions held in connection with an international conference serve a twofold purpose : on the one hand, they afford an opportunity to the delegates partaking in the work of the conference, who often by reason of their official status are subjected to many restraints in formal sittings, of getting into personal touch with each other and of having informal talks during

which they can exchange views and information and possibly work out the basis for an agreement. It is always a gratifying sight to see two loyal adversaries who perhaps an hour earlier had been hurling at each other unvarnished truths or skilfully thrusting their foils sitting at a dinner-party, side by side, chatting and laughing heartily, having apparently merged their differences in the warm atmosphere which usually develops around a well-appointed table. Diplomatic negotiations carried on secretly and on a large scale in hotel sitting-rooms between the chief spokesmen should be avoided, since such a method of transacting business arouses resentment among the other delegates who, having had no share in these parleys, feel very much out of the picture and object to being confronted with a ready-made pie in which they had no finger.

Another purpose which is served by the social functions arranged in connection with an international conference is that of enabling the delegates attending the conference to become acquainted with the people, the institutions and the culture of the country in which they meet, while at the same time giving an opportunity to the nationals of that country of learning something of the aims and working of the conference held on their territory. As soon as delegates alight from their train, they have the impression of being whisked away into

the carriages of a scenery-railway from which eventually they will emerge, if slightly bewildered, at least pleased with the sensations and emotions produced by the crowded scenes they have witnessed. In addition to the hard work he is expected to do in and outside the meetings, the perfect delegate is required also to go through an elaborate, if well meant, programme of sight-seeing and entertainments. Nor does he wish to miss many items of this programme, first out of courtesy towards his hosts and then because he is quite determined to enjoy to the full every opportunity of enlarging his outlook the conference can offer. He will assiduously go the round of the historical buildings, churches, museums and the curiosities of the town, from which he will endeavour to catch some of the spirit of the country. He will be a genial guest at all or nearly all the luncheons, dinner-parties and receptions offered by the authorities of the country welcoming the conference and at these functions he will have many opportunities of getting into touch with government officials, representatives of industry, commerce or organised labour, members of the intelligentsia and others. Specially arranged visits to factories, social institutions, universities will permit delegates to form for themselves an idea of the customs and conditions of life prevailing in the country whose hospitality they are enjoying. When a conference has been

summoned to deal with a subject of a highly technical character, such as safety measures in industry, the programme may include visits to safety museums and plants applying the latest safety devices.

Drawing up the Programme.

When a Government has decided to invite a conference to meet in its capital or some other town of special interest, and of course has set aside the necessary funds for that purpose, and the invitation has been accepted, the first practical step to be taken is to draw up the programme of the session. This task is usually entrusted to a Reception or Hospitality Committee which is set up by the inviting Government on a more or less broad basis. It generally includes officials of the various Government departments concerned with the work of the conference and, maybe, also of representatives of the national organisations or institutions directly interested in the activities of the conference. This committee, which should begin to work well in advance of the meeting, should in the first place get into touch with the officials of the invited institution, in order to ascertain how and when the various social functions contemplated can be dove-tailed into the actual working programme of the meeting and what may be the requirements of the conference in regard to premises.

The Quest for Suitable Premises.

The task of finding suitable premises for the meeting of any important international conference which is the first business to be dealt with by the Reception Committee, is often a baffling puzzle. For some reason or another all the buildings which seem the most appropriate are declared unavailable by those in charge of them and premises which might be made use of appear to have some irretrievable drawbacks. When quite a lot of bad blood has been caused by protracted negotiations very often the head of the competent department must himself in the last resort take a decision.

The amount of work required for equipping the conference hall and its annexes will depend upon the importance of the meeting and on the suitability of the selected building for the needs of the conference. If the building is normally used for the meetings of some large national institution, such as the legislative assembly, the organs of an important ministry or of a university, few changes may be necessary to adapt the premises to the requirements of the conference. On the other hand, it frequently happens that the only available building is most unsuitable and in that event adapting the premises often partakes of a nightmare for the harassed official responsible for seeing that everything is spick-and-span on the day of the opening. Very likely he and his assistants will have been up

throughout the previous night battling with unforeseen difficulties.

The requirements in regard to premises for a large international conference are more or less those described in Chapter III. For meetings of a more restricted character, the premises and other facilities may of course be simpler. Generally speaking, it may be said that for the meeting of the executive body of a large international institution, or of an international organ of some importance composed of, say, from 30 to 50 persons the following accommodation should be provided: A main meeting room with the necessary seating accommodation, a suitable number of committee rooms of the appropriate dimensions, a private room for the chairman of the body in question, and the required number of offices for the principal officials of the international institution concerned, as well as for the staff of the secretariat. The shorthand, typing and roneographing departments should also be adequately lodged not too far from the main meeting room. The lobby should be equipped with the usual facilities such as an information office, a stall for the distribution of documents, telephone-boxes, etc. A special Press room is also indispensable.

The Programme of Receptions.

Concurrently with the material arrangements the Hospitality Committee will be getting busy drawing

up the programme of receptions. This programme which will eventually be printed in an attractive form, is expected to establish a skilful balance between work and pleasure. The items corresponding to work are more or less fixed in advance by the scope of the agenda to be gone through by which is also determined the number of plenary and of committee sittings to be foreseen in the programme. The remaining time is available for the various social functions contemplated. Each country has of course its own customs and traditions in regard to hospitality and no cut-and-dried scheme can be suggested for the planning of the entertainments and visits to be arranged in connection with an international conference. However, in this field also, a certain measure of international standardisation has been introduced and experience shows that the social side of international conferences is organised on very similar lines in most countries.

Broadly speaking, the programme usually includes the following functions: Formal dinner-parties generally offered respectively by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and by the Minister responsible for the Department dealing with the subjects to be treated by the international conference; as a rule only the principal delegates and the high officials of the secretariat are invited to these official dinners, which are arranged either in some building or in a large hotel. Another

important social function is the reception which is usually offered in his stately abode by the head of the State, king or president of a Republic, as the case may be, and which is intended for the same category of persons as those just mentioned. The town authorities, mayor or municipal council, are equally desirous to welcome the delegates from many nations and they will most certainly wish to entertain their guests either at an official luncheon or dinner-party or at a reception held in some historic mansion with all the picturesque pageantry which usually attends such functions. If a large reception is decided on, it will afford a suitable opportunity for showing hospitality on a wider scale by extending the invitations to all the members of delegations and officials of the secretariat. A great variety of other dinner-parties, luncheons or receptions will probably form part of the programme of entertainments. National institutions or organisations especially interested in the work of the conference will probably be desirous to take advantage of the opportunity which the meeting offers of welcoming their foreign colleagues and making known their national achievements.

For instance, if the conference is called together to deal with matters relating to international trade or economic questions, it is likely that the leading national bodies or associations whose activities cover the same fields will wish to be among the

list of hosts receiving the delegates. Similarly if the conference is composed of experts on some scientific or technical problem, the specialists on these subjects, nationals of the country in which the conference is held, will welcome the opportunity afforded to them of getting into touch with distinguished specialists from other countries.

The Ladies' Committee.

A special committee composed of ladies representatives of the country in which the conference is held is usually entrusted with the task of looking after the ladies who accompany the delegates and who, not being required to attend all the sittings, will perhaps feel somewhat at a loss in a large foreign city with the topography, customs and language of which they are perhaps unacquainted. A special programme of receptions and sight-seeing for these ladies will be drawn up by the Ladies Committee, probably in collaboration with the representative women's organisations of the country.

Sight-seeing and Excursions.

In addition to the official luncheons, dinner-parties and receptions the programme will include visits to buildings or places of historic importance, to institutions of special interest to the delegates,

and if the time available permit, excursions to other national centres especially worth visiting. Such excursions usually take place during the week-end. It is not unusual to hold the closing sittings of an international conference in another town than that in which the greater part of the session was held, thus permitting delegates to visit a second important centre of the inviting country. Special arrangements for the transport of delegates to this centre are usually made by the Hospitality Committee in agreement with the competent national authorities.

Travelling, Customs and Visas.

Delegates attending an international conference generally make their own arrangements for the journey from their town of residence to that in which the meeting is to take place. The authorities of the inviting country may however wish to facilitate the journey as much as possible, particularly in regard to the necessary visas and customs formalities. For this purpose, it may be found expedient to send a form to all delegates either directly or through the intermediary of their Government requesting them to furnish particulars in regard to their date of arrival, the frontier station through which they propose to enter the country, and the legation to which they will apply for an

entrance visa. This information will enable the authorities of the inviting country to give the necessary instructions to their consular and customs agents for the purpose of facilitating, as much as possible, these unavoidable formalities.

As regards hotel accommodation, when the meeting is held in a large city, delegates usually book the accommodation they require directly. In other cases, where the language in particular might offer a difficulty, delegates may be requested to get into touch with a person or office appointed in the country concerned through whose intermediary hotel accommodation will be reserved. This course seems most suitable when the delegates are to be the guests of the inviting Government.

The official programme of receptions often conveys a very inadequate impression of the amount of generous hospitality which is shown to delegates. Many countries have a special gift of manifesting the pleasure they feel in receiving their guests by unexpected and delicate touches. Thus, on one occasion, the delegates attending a meeting in the ancient capital of a country of Eastern Europe were agreeably surprised when alighting from their train to be met by a group of charming and highly educated young ladies, all fluent linguists, who had been detailed to take the delegates in charge and show them about. The eloquent and almost romantic speeches which were delivered by

many delegates at the closing sitting of the conference were perhaps not directed solely to the official authorities.

The President's Reception.

When the conference takes place at the seat of a permanent international institution under the auspices of this institution, the social side differs to some extent from the description given above. In this case the social functions are not organised in accordance with a rigid plan, but are the spontaneous outcome of the initiatives taken by the several delegations. Of course, to avoid clashing, a record is kept by a responsible official of the social fixtures foreseen. The head of the permanent institution will make it a point to get into personal touch with all the delegates by means of organised hospitality grouping his guests according to their affinities, and sometimes even indulging in the mischievous pleasure of bringing antagonists together.

A regular feature of practically all international conferences is the President's reception which usually marks the peak of the social life of the conference. The organisation of this important reception is generally left to officials of the secretariat who, in consultation with the President's delegation, undertake all the necessary arrange-

ments. The President, in accepting his office, has of course obtained from his Government the necessary funds to cover this outlay. The President's reception, which includes everybody connected with the conference, is under normal circumstances a joyous gathering. Invitations are issued to all the members of delegations, to the representatives of the authorities of the seat of the institution, to members of the diplomatic corps, and to the officials of all ranks composing the secretariat. These receptions are necessarily marked by a certain uniformity, but nevertheless each President's hospitality has its own characteristics and sometimes serves to make known discreetly products of his country. An Irish President surprised his guests by offering them Limerick ham which had travelled a long distance by plane while, on another occasion, a German President, a very humane ecclesiastic and at the same time a distinguished Labour Minister, had the happy idea of sending for barrels of the best Munich beer, which was very welcome on a hot afternoon.

The social factor has always played an important part in all human affairs and, though in present circumstances this aspect of international conferences may appear almost out of place, it was felt nevertheless necessary to include this element in any practical work dealing with the organisation of international conferences.

CONCLUSIONS

In the foregoing pages an attempt has been made to review in a systematic manner the methods and practices which have been applied during the past two decades, as the result of experience, to the organisation and running of international conferences. Needless to say, this review makes no claim to exhaust the subject nor to give a complete picture of all the problems which may arise in this connection or of all the conceivable solutions which may be given to them. As has been repeatedly pointed out international administration must be regarded as being still in an experimental stage and the practical devices worked out in some of the existing international organisations necessarily reflect the embryonic state of development of international co-operation. Thus the rules of procedure observed in most international conferences, though often constituting an ingenious attempt to translate into practical life the somewhat bewildering provisions of the constitution, suffer from all the limitations and safeguards with which it has hitherto been deemed necessary to hedge round the activities of international institutions.

To a more enlightened and broader conception of the part to be played by central bodies charged with the task of managing the affairs of common interest to all nations will doubtless correspond in the fullness of time more efficient and business-like methods of work.

It must be recognised that up to the present considerations relating to prestige or derived from the morbid fear of forfeiting any part of jealously guarded national sovereignty have played much too great a part in international conferences. Only too frequently are delegates moved to speak, not because they have any definite contribution to make in the discussion on a certain subject, but simply because they consider that it is fitting that the voice of their country should be heard in the debate.

Similarly, endless statements relating to the national legislation and practice of each and every country taking part in a conference have to be included in voluminous reports not on account of the intrinsic value of the information but merely because if it were not reproduced a major diplomatic incident would inevitably occur, although the best interests of all concerned and common sense alike would justify the making use solely of the experience gained by the most advanced countries in the particular domain under discussion. The most serviceable type of preparatory report drawn up

for international conferences is that which reviews the various elements of the subject in an objective manner, while referring only to the most characteristic national legislation and experience by way of illustration. Such a report may be best prepared by a small body of experts with a view to its subsequently forming a basis for discussion in a larger assembly.

Undoubtedly international conferences which are best suited for achieving the purpose set before them are those which are restricted in regard to membership and composed of specialists invited to attend not as government officials but in a personal capacity. In such meetings questions of prestige very seldom interfere with their efficient working, and the yield of their labours is a better return for the money spent than debates in more spectacular gatherings.

Existing international organisations have from the very outset suffered from many organic malformations the effects of which have been clearly diagnosed by some of the most highly-reputed and experienced physicians. One of these malformations was undoubtedly the inadequate measure of effective authority which was conferred upon the central bodies made responsible for maintaining peace and adjusting the prevailing legal situations to the constantly changing realities of the modern world. A second and equally crippling organic

malformation was the failure to organise an international force capable of ensuring the observance of the law which omission gave definite encouragement to the prospective law-breakers. A third and no less serious organic malformation was the all-embracing and world-wide competence which devolved upon these institutions on the false assumption that the world had reached complete and homogeneous unity and that all States were equal in strength and influence.

One of the fundamental problems which will have to be tackled and solved in any fresh endeavour to create international machinery for the purpose of ensuring the orderly governance of the community of nations will be that of establishing a closer relationship than has hitherto been achieved between the real powers and responsibilities of each country and its measure of influence within the international organs empowered to take decisions affecting the peace and well-being of nations. Great Powers upon whose shoulders rests the main burden of carrying out the decisions taken resent being urged to pursue courses fraught with potential dangers by smaller countries which, although they may be right in principle, are not in a position to take any very effective share in the enforcement of the suggested measures. And, with equal justification, small countries are resentful of being turned into mere puppets in the hands of the great

powers and being coerced into applying decisions in the making of which they had no say.

As shrewd observers of our sorely afflicted world have already suggested one way out of the difficulty would no doubt consist in creating larger territorial and political units than have so far existed by grouping together States with strong racial and cultural affinities and common interests in regional federations which in their turn would be represented in the international agencies to be set up. Such a method would permit of a more accurate assessment of the forces and interests involved and of the handling of problems in an atmosphere of greater reality than has been the case in the past.

The effectiveness of the new international institutions which will certainly be created after the present struggle is over will only be evidenced when they have been subjected to the test of time. The mere fact that a score of peaceful years may follow the present war should in no way be regarded as definite proof of the permanent reliability of whatever machinery may be set up. Only when the war-ridden world has recovered its strength and balance and a new generation has grown up will it be possible to ascertain whether the peace has been won or lost. One thing seems pretty obvious which is that what the world needs is not a set of inapplicable rules mingling imaginary idealism with war-bred vindictiveness neither of which is a wise

counsellor for establishing an enduring peace, but a sound practical machinery for adjusting differences and solving problems as they arise, thus making it possible to remove the deep-seated causes of war and gradually to build up a strong collective consciousness of the value of peaceful methods in terms of human life and material interests.

By its gradual spreading to the whole world the war has given further, if unfortunate, evidence of the close interdependence of all nations, while at the same time ruthlessly driving home the truth that war and peace are but two complementary aspects of one and the same problem. Moreover, while bringing in its train the usual measure of suffering and hardships the war has at least taught mankind the salutary lesson that many of the most harassing problems of peace-time can be solved when sufficient energy and adequate means are applied to them.

If the post-war reconstruction problems are approached in the right spirit and with determination, there is no reason to believe that mankind is incapable of creating and keeping in constant working order the requisite machinery for solving these problems. Undoubtedly one of the means of attaining this end will be the holding of many international conferences, large and small, for which it is hoped that the experience recorded in these pages will be of some assistance.

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